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THE ANGELS' SONG :

A Christmas Token.



THE ANGELS' SONG:

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Christmas Token.

BY

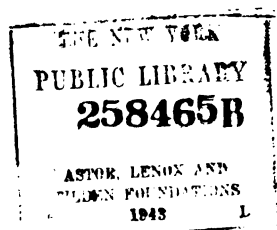
CHARLES B. TAYLER, M.A.,

RECTOR OF OTLEY, SUFFOLK.

"No wonder that they who live without God in the world, should keep
Christmas without Christ. There is as little of true joy in their
merriment, as of sunshine in a Lapland winter."—MS.

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THE ANGELS' SONG.

CHAPTER I.

"I call to remembrance my song in the night : I commune with mine own heart."—PSALM LXXVII. 6.

"**H**AVE I in truth learnt the Angels' Song?"
The words were those of an aged man. He was sitting in his study at an early hour. Though the oldest person in the house, he was the earliest riser. The sun had not yet risen, and the morning star was shining in a sky of the deepest, clearest azure, with intense brilliancy. He loved to gaze upon its pure and lustrous light. It always recalled to his mind the most blessed period of his past life,—that time when it had pleased God to lead him to become an anxious searcher and student in His inspired Word, the book then open before him. It recalled to his mind that noble verse in the epistles of Peter,¹ which so well

¹ 2 Peter i. 19.

described his own state when Divine truth began to dawn upon his darkened mind, and when his prayerful and close study of the written Word was graciously rewarded by the knowledge and the wisdom which he sought. "You have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." His heart, he knew, had been long that "dark place"; but he had been led, when a young man, to take heed unto that sure word of prophecy, the Holy Bible. He had at that season of his life realized to himself the experience of those words of the Psalmist: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."¹ It had been by taking heed to God's Word, and to his own way according to that Word, that he had become a blessing to all around him. He was a good man, respected and loved by all who esteem high principles and consistent practice in their fellow-men. His moral worth and manly integrity were accompanied by that gentle-

¹ Psalm cxix. 9.

ness and courtesy of manner which constitute a true gentleman ; and his kindness of heart and cheerfulness had done much to recommend that holy religion which he always, and openly professed. He lost no opportunity of winning by the Word ; but he sought also to win without the Word. He was of an advanced age, and much endeared to all his family circle. It was the morning before Christmas Day. The season was at hand, which from many circumstances of the highest import, possessed a peculiar interest with him. It was to him always a season of close self-examination. Admirable as his life was, he was a truly humble-minded man, conscious of many short-comings, and innumerable deficiencies.

“ Have I really learnt the Angels' Song ? ” he said, closely questioning his own heart. “ Let me commune with myself. Am I striving to the utmost of my power to give ‘ glory to God in the highest,’ and to spread ‘ peace on earth,’ and to show ‘ good will towards men ’ ? Is my faith ‘ growing exceedingly,’ and ‘ my charity towards all men abounding ’ ? Above all, let me ask myself, am I intently occupied with the consideration

of the sufferings of my blessed Lord, and the glory that followed those sufferings ; which things, we read, ' the angels desire to look into ' ? Blessed be God, I am still in strong health ; and mine is indeed a green old age. But my time on earth cannot now be very long ; my journey must be drawing towards its close. Am I ready to receive my call whenever that summons shall come ? And will it be, as I trust it may, through His unspeakable love, to enter into the joy of my Lord ? Thank God, ' I know whom I have believed ; and am persuaded, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day. ' "

He closed the book ; the season of his morning devotions was concluded : the sun was rising in the east, and its first beams fell upon a portrait much valued by him. It was the head of an aged minister of Christ, distinguished for a peculiar sweetness of expression as well as for its highly intellectual character. He stood before it for some minutes, gazing with a smile of affection upon it, and murmured to himself : " my father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof ! "

Not many hours after, he was again seated at his study table. He had promised that the following narrative of some circumstances in his past life should be read to his household circle on that evening, which was Christmas-eve. But his work was not yet concluded : a few pages yet remained to be written, and he had come thither to finish them. Many solemn thoughts had arisen in his heart during the time that he was thus occupied in recalling the events which he had written down ; but the predominant feeling throughout, and especially towards the end, had been that of adoring love and deep thankfulness to that gracious Being, whose goodness and mercy had followed him all the days of his life.

CHAPTER II.

"He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings."—2 SAMUEL

xviii. 27.

MANY are acquainted with the injunction of the apostle Paul: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." My father, I fear, at the time to which I am about to refer, seldom opened the epistles of St. Paul, or any other part of the sacred volume where they are found. He was, however, a man of a kind and noble spirit, and seldom better pleased than when he could find an occasion of doing a service to any fellow-creature. He had a distant relation, whom we had never seen, a clergyman, residing in a remote and mountainous district of North Wales.

Sometimes, but not frequently, a letter passed between them. One autumn, between forty and fifty years ago, the post brought him a letter from his cousin; but not in the good man's own hand-

writing. His son had written under his father's dictation. The poor clergyman had been very ill. "Your kind heart will rejoice, my dear cousin"—it was thus he wrote—"to learn that I am recovering, though but slowly, from an illness which, in the opinion of my doctor, appeared to be unto death. I humbly and heartily thank God that He has seen it good to spare me a little longer to my dear children. The only sorrow I had to bear at the near prospect of death, was that of leaving them. They are young and unacquainted with the ways of the world: they need the shelter of a father's roof, and the guidance of a father's counsel. Glad and grateful as I am to find myself greatly restored to health, I am somewhat disconcerted by the announcement which my doctor has made to me this morning. He tells me that I must pass the winter in the south of England; and declares that, humanly speaking, my ultimate recovery is hopeless, if I do not leave Llanellwyn till next April. I offered many objections; but the chief one, I own, was my secret unwillingness to leave home. I can ill afford to do so. I do not wish to touch the sum of money which

I have been enabled, with some difficulty, to put aside for the expenses of my son Hugh at college. The income I receive from my Living is small ; I venture therefore to ask you to grant me two favors,—the first is the loan of thirty pounds. I find that I can repay it by small instalments, or I would not ask for it. The other is, that you will engage for me a small cottage, if such is to be found, within a short distance of your own residence, and as near your southern coast as possible. We want but one sitting-room, and three bed-rooms ; one of those for our servant, as my affectionate boy has insisted on sleeping in a small bed in my chamber since my illness. We care not how humble our habitation is : we are used to frugal fare and poor accommodation. I use my son's pen, and hope soon to be able to present him and his sister Pamela to you. They have been a great comfort to me ; and if I live to see them grow up in the fear of God, I shall have cause to be doubly thankful to our heavenly Father that I have not been taken from them.

“ Your affectionate cousin,

“ OWEN WYNNE.”

Such was the letter of our distant kinsman. My father's reply was sent by return of post. He was not a man to hesitate when he saw the way open to do a kindness and to exercise hospitality. This is his letter. I have kept them both, as you see. I found them, with many other family papers, in my father's old cabinet of cypress wood, after his death :—

“Reverend Sir, and Dear Cousin,—I am heartily sorry to hear of your illness, and rejoice to learn that you are in a fair way of recovery. You have my best thanks for treating me as a friend. You will do me a favor, and I shall thank you, if you will accept the enclosed cheque for fifty pounds, and say no more about it ;—I don't want it, and you do. Had I needed a like sum, I make no doubt you would have sent it to me, and I assure you I would have taken it without a scruple. You will really oblige me by giving up your scheme about the cottage, and taking up your abode with me and my children till the winter is over, and the warm weather has come again. We can accommodate your son and daughter and your servant. You shall have your own set of apart-

ments, and join our family party or not, as, and when you please. I have long wished to make acquaintance with you, and am glad to find that the time has come at last for us to meet. I am not a man of many words, but I mean what I say, when I tell you that you shall have a hearty welcome to Westhall. You will scarcely find a more sheltered nook for your winter quarters. We are on the southern side of the south downs, and the old mansion is so placed that the hills and woods of the park rise high above it, and form a screen from the east wind, as well as from the north. Let me hear from you soon, and let some day within the next fortnight be fixed for the commencement of your journey.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“JOHN SOMERVILLE.”

The leaves were beginning to fall from the old elms of the west avenue, but the oaks and beeches still stood in all their fulness of foliage, though rich in their autumnal coloring, when our stranger guests arrived. We had formed no high ideas as to the appearance and manners of a poor Welch

clergyman, and his home-bred children, and were prepared for a certain air of rustic awkwardness, and for the peculiar tones of the Welch dialect. We were therefore the more astonished when we became acquainted with our guests.

The first impression, indeed, made upon us by them, dispelled at once our preconceived opinions. We felt that whatever they might be, they were not to be regarded as our inferiors. There was that quiet, and even dignified self-possession about the father, which is not peculiar to any class of society ; but which, wherever it is found, is usually the indication of mental and moral excellence ; but there was also that refinement, which is neither given by superiority of mind, nor by the mere cultivation of the intellectual powers ; but is only seen in those whose spirit has been renewed by Divine grace, and who are living in close communion with Him who is the " Light of life." His countenance in repose was grave, but when he spoke it was lighted up by a smile of peculiar sweetness ; and I have never seen an expression of such benevolence as that which beamed in his eyes, nor heard tones of such

genuine kindness as those of his voice. His son and daughter were twins, though not resembling each other. The former, tall and manly far beyond his years, his slight but well-knit frame had been braced by exercise and temperance, and was distinguished alike for strength and graceful proportions. His countenance, unlike that of his father, was bright with the glow of health; but it wore that expression of purity and ingenuous modesty, which gives so peculiar a charm to early manhood, and declares that the inner man is as yet unspoiled and unspotted from the world.

I have never seen any one of her gentle sex so exquisitely feminine as Pamela. I have never seen such delicacy and sweetness, united to such plain good sense. She was that very rare character, an unselfish person; exemplifying, in her spirit and conduct, a Christian rule which at that time I had never met with—"None of us liveth to himself."

The admirable qualities of this brother and sister did not, of course, strike us when we first saw them. It was only by degrees we became acquainted with their modest excellence. All

that we observed was a charming naturalness, and a propriety of demeanor becoming their age and position, with which we were all pleased, without being exactly aware of the reason. What we could not understand at all, however, was that which nevertheless we saw before us—how it was possible that a poor country clergyman and his children, who had lived out of the world among the mountains of Wales, could be what these cousins of ours, these strangers as we called them, evidently were,—persons who seemed to understand, as well as we did, the tone of good society. There was, in fact, and I could not help smiling to myself when I discovered it, more of a certain provincialism of ideas and manners about our whole circle at Westhall, than in our guests. I have since learnt the cause, and no longer wonder at it. The father, a gentleman by birth and education, had acquired that finish of manners under the highest teaching. The book which he had consulted for every rule of life and conduct was the Word of God. The finest example, of all that makes a man noble and gentle among his fellows, is to be found in one, who, when it pleased

Him to come down from heaven to earth, chose His position in society, not among the princes and nobles of this world, but became a poor carpenter in a distant province of the Roman empire. The greater part of His life on earth was passed in the rude society of a small town among the mountains of Galilee; a place so despised, not only by the people of Judea, but of Galilee, that when He commenced His ministry, it was said, with reference to the place of His abode, by Nathaniel, a Galilean, of Cana: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The first gentleman in the land, who is initiated in all the conventional mysteries of the most high-bred circles, will be wanting in true gentility of mind and manners till he has taken his place at the feet of Him who for our sakes left His throne in the highest heavens, for the manger of Bethlehem, the carpenter's shop of Nazareth, and the cross of infamy on Calvary; and who, "though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." The mind that was in Christ is the only sure foundation of good manners; and the graces with which

He adorned the human character are the finishing graces of the real gentleman :

"Our polished manners are a garb we wear."—*Cooper*.

Manners are, indeed, to the inner man what our garments are to the outer man. A prince in the coarse raiment of a peasant would still possess the same regal air and lofty bearing which distinguished him in his attire of purple and gold ; a kitchen wench, though decked out in all the trappings of a queen, would soon betray, by some awkward gesture, the vulgarity of her calling : and thus it too often happens, that vulgar pride and unfeeling insolence, the plain proof of a heart still untouched by divine grace — still at enmity with God—still unacquainted with its own deceitful and desperate wickedness—may be found under the garb of courtly manners ; while the sweet humility and gentle loveliness of the real Christ-like character may be found in many a poor uneducated inmate of the cottages of our land. The country clergyman who had come with his children to pass the winter at Westhall, had made the holy Bible his oracle on every point of faith

and practice. He knew how apt we all are to forget that the principles of the kingdom of God, if really received into the heart, are like leaven, and must leaven the whole man with their new and heavenly influence; that they introduce no partial change, but spread their divine leaven throughout the whole inner man; communicating their peculiar character to the disposition, the actions, and, in a word, to the entire life and conversation of the renewed individual. And thus it was that he had become, what the apostle tells us the true child of God must be, the temple of the Holy Ghost; a high and glorious distinction, but one bestowed by the Father of lights upon His forgiven children. And though he, in common with all other children of grace, had this treasure in an earthen vessel, the light shone from within with a divine lustre; and this was the secret of that expression of sweetness upon his countenance; those gentle tones of kindness; and that lovely consistency of conduct which at length won for him the hearts of our whole party.

His children had been trained by him in the same school; he had taught them that religion is

a reality, or is nothing ; and this he had taught as much by his own example, as by his constant and unceasing instruction. There was the most delightful and affectionate confidence between the father and his children ; but there was at the same time an implicit and unquestioning obedience. They did not fear him, but they seemed to fear nothing so much as displeasing him. He had taught them that a father holds his commission from God ; that he stands, in a manner, in God's stead to his children ; and from their earliest childhood he had insisted on his own undisputed authority, and had never given a reason, or answered a question, by which that authority could be affected.

I remember his saying to my father, with a calm gravity which impressed me deeply at the time : —“ Nothing can be more unwise than the present system of education : the children of this generation are not in their proper place : they must have a reason for every thing they are told to do : and what follows more naturally, than that when that reason is submitted to their opinion, an objection, on their part, should follow ? We

are training these young creatures, my dear sir, to take our place in this uncertain world when we shall be dead and gone. Our Heavenly Father gives no reason, when He visits us with some dispensation of His providence, under which our will is tempted to rebel, and the cause and end of which are alike mysterious and unknown to us. We have no choice but to submit; that is, to yield obedience to His fiat. In process of time we are taught by succeeding events, and the gradual unfolding of His gracious designs, to understand that His dealings with us are not only those of the all-wise and omnipotent God, but of a most gracious Father. The child that has been trained from its earliest years to submission and obedience to an earthly father, and to wear the yoke from his youth, has been prepared, so far as human means can prepare him, for the discipline to which the man must necessarily be subjected when he takes his appointed place among his fellow men; while, on the other hand, we are beginning to see the effects of a contrary system in the untamed wills and the insubordination of those around us: 'every man doing that which

seemeth right in his own eyes.' I have been always struck with a few words in the gospel of St. Luke, where it is related that Jesus went down with His parents to Nazareth; the words are these: 'He was subject unto them.' I have endeavored to keep these words constantly before my children; and the only reason, that I have added to the one great lesson of obedience,—that is, that it is the will of God that the child should obey his parent,—has been this: that it was the example set by Christ himself."

But I must return to the day of their first arrival; though I warn my reader that the pages now before him, are but a home story, and that he will meet with few, if any, startling incidents. The strangers, as we called them, had to undergo somewhat of a trying ordeal on their introduction to Westhall. It is an old rambling mansion, and looks as if nestled in among its groves and woods, but it is a spacious and comfortable house, and was well suited to the large family party often assembled in it. My reader will discover that I was a great admirer of these country cousins: I was not so then; though my heart was insensibly drawn

towards them, and in my conscience and judgment I could not choose but secretly approve much that provoked me in them on my first acquaintance. They came to create a revolution in the whole house, and to turn our old notions, even the world in our hearts, upside down. I believe I was the first won over to their side. But I must say a few words about myself at that time.

I was my father's eldest son, and had come of age about a year or two before. My birthday had been celebrated with great rejoicings and festivities. I had long felt myself a person of considerable importance. Such had now become a settled opinion with me. I was, however, reserved and silent; fond of books, but not studious, and given to a desultory kind of reading. My reserve was attributed to pride, but it was rather an idle dislike of speaking on any subject which did not particularly interest myself. I was also a quiet observer; and when others were making their remarks about the new comers, I was closely observing them, and well-disposed to find fault. But with a natural spirit of contradiction, secret-

ly taking their part whenever I heard them attacked.

They had scarcely retired to their rooms to prepare for dinner, when my uncle Peregrine said : " I suspect this cousin of ours is a Methodist. Give him straight-combed hair, and a drawling voice, and he would pass for one ; for he is primitive enough in his appearance. As for the youth, his tailor is, I suppose, a mountaineer as well as himself. Did you ever see such a style of dress ? I suspect his father wore that green coat and those nankeen breeches before him."

" It matters little what the fashion of his clothes is," said my aunt Margaret ; " he has so good a figure, and holds himself so well, that he gives a grace to them ; and he has a fine open countenance. Don't you think so, Oliver ? Don't you like our new cousins ?—I like them all." My uncle Oliver was a man of few words, and not of the happiest temper. " It is early in the day," he replied, " to form an opinion. I must see more of them before I can tell if I like them."

" But I am sure you must own," said my aunt,

"that they have pleasant looks, and pleasant manners."

"All is not gold that glitters," he answered.

"But I think we have seen true gold to-day," said my aunt; "and I must own that I like these strangers vastly."

"Pshaw!" cried my uncle Oliver, contemptuously; "you like every one, Margaret. You are easily pleased, and often mistaken."

"Better to be that," said my father, "than never pleased, and still often mistaken. My dear Horace," he added, putting his hand on my shoulder, "I venture to say that you are as well pleased as I am with this good kinsman of ours. I could tell by your looks,—and you seldom took your eyes off them,—that they had made a favorable impression upon you."

"As to that," I replied, "I care very little about them, sir: they are well enough; though you are quite right, father, when you say I looked much at them. I was inclined to smile more than once at the antiquated style of these country cousins of ours,—not that I have any fault to find with either of them."

"Get rid of this habit of contradiction, Horace, my dear boy," he said with an air of authority; "for it is taking deeper root, I fear, in you, the older you grow. It is a bad mood, and I beg I may not see it in exercise with these worthy kinsfolks of ours. Remember that they are strangers, and therefore, claim the rights of hospitality and kindness from all under my roof."

Just then my sister's carriage drove up, and she and her husband were announced. They had come, at my father's request, to dine with us, to meet their unknown relations. Colonel Wyndham had not long left the army, and had taken a house in my uncle Peregrine's parish, about five miles from Westhall. My sister Susan was many years older than myself; but still a beautiful and elegant woman, and looked rather like the sister than the mother of her eldest daughter, Olivia. Susan had been the belle of the county. She was somewhat satirical, but her liveliness and unvaried good temper had made her a general favorite. Though she had long left her father's house, she possessed more influence there than any member of her family; for she had that kind of quick sense

which led her to take in any question almost at a glance, and to form and give an opinion upon it. She was, of course, sometimes mistaken in her conclusions, yet her readiness, and her decision, always told to her advantage; and her good humor and tact enabled her to give but little offence, even when, in her opinions, she stood alone. She rather prided herself on speaking her mind, but she was kind-hearted and lady-like, and she always did so with a gentleness which all but disarmed her opponent.

I heard my uncle Peregrine say to my aunt:—"Well; I wonder what Susan will think of these strangers? She will find out what they are soon enough."

"I venture to surmise," replied my aunt, "that she will be much pleased with them. Mrs. Wyndham is a charming woman; and has been so much used to society, that she can distinguish worth and merit wherever she finds it."

"Humph!" said my uncle, and turned away.

Susan met the good clergyman and his son and daughter with more warmth and frankness than any of the party had done, with the excep-

tion of my father ; made some complimentary remark about each of the young persons ; presented her husband to Mr. Wynne, and then immediately entered into conversation with him with as much ease and cordiality, as if she had known him all her life.

Dinner was announced ; and when we were assembled round the table, my father asked Mr. Wynne to say grace for us. The devout and reverent manner in which that grace was offered, few as the words were, produced a silence which continued for some moments after the party had sat down. And, during the whole of the dinner, though no one could well have said how it happened, Mr. Wynne managed to keep the conversation almost on the one topic which possessed so deep an interest in his own heart. He found attentive hearers in my father, and in my aunt and sister. His remarks were met from time to time, however, with a stare of astonishment by each and all of the party, with the exception of Mrs. Wyndham. The rest seemed as if taken by surprise, as much by the quiet ease, the seeming unconsciousness of there being anything extraordinary in the tone of

his conversation, as by the subject of that conversation itself. The fact was, I repeat, that he spoke on the subject that was always present to his own mind ; his thoughts found expression in their natural current, and flowed on in one direction. There was nothing forced in the language which he used. It was that of authority—for he felt that his office was that of a teacher, to whom the Lord God had given a commission of the deepest importance ; but it was the language of gentleness and courtesy ; for he knew that his commission was one of love and tender compassion. Ah ! who would think it strange if a stranger and a traveller, on being invited to our tables, should speak of some delightful region in which he had dwelt ; describing to us its enchanting landscapes ; dilating on its exquisite climate ; giving an account of the customs and manners of its inhabitants, and speaking of the noble and graceful bearing of their king ? Are we not in a fallen world, and in a corrupt and degraded state of society, when he who speaks to us of “ the better land,” and tells us of the “ King in His beauty” as He reveals Himself in the hearts of those who

walk with Him by faith,—is looked at with wonder, as a dreamer and enthusiast, or provokes the smile of a contemptuous ridicule, for intruding upon the company a distasteful subject? Once or twice I thought I perceived the slightest rising of such a smile upon the fair face of my sister Susan; but she was too well bred, and had too much command of countenance, to allow her feelings to escape. The smile died away, and she appeared to listen with grave attention. I was, however, a close observer, and the only one of the party who suspected what was passing in her mind; for she seemed to every one else to be much pleased with our guests. Part of the conversation I well remember, for it was on that occasion that my attention was first called to the volumes of one who has since become my favorite poet.

“You are fond of reading, sir,” said aunt Margaret. She sat at the head of my father’s table, having taken the management of his house from the time of my dear mother’s death, who had been called from us when I was a child,—“you are fond of reading, sir, for I saw a book in your hand when you entered the hall?”

"I am, madam," replied Mr. Wynne, "and with that book I am especially delighted. It is a volume of poetry, by a new author, and of a very high order. Poetry so pure, and, I may add, so holy in its character, so sparkling with playful and delicate wit, so full of masculine strength, and yet, breathing, at times, so plaintive a strain of enchanting tenderness, that I know nothing like it, that is, among the works of modern literature. You are acquainted, I am almost sure," he added, turning to my sister, who sat on the other side of him, "with the poetry of Cowper. The volume I have been reading to-day is the second. The first volume appeared two or three years ago. Strange to say, that first volume attracted but little attention, and met with no sale. I met with it on its publication,—for I knew the excellent brother of the author, during his latter years at Cambridge. I fully appreciated the first volume; but it seems the success of the second, which is something extraordinary, has awakened the admiration of the public to the beauty of its forerunner. Surely, you have read Cowper?"

"I certainly will read his poems," she replied.

“What are his subjects?”

“His one subject, madam, is the majesty and goodness of the Lord our God. His one aim is to give glory to Him as the Father, and the friend in Christ, of our lost and wretched race: I cannot enumerate, however, the various subjects from the most familiar to the most sublime, which are presented in rich profusion before the reader's mind—but all are gilded as with a glory, by a light from Heaven.”

My sister replied by some unmeaning observation, which expressed, I am sorry to say, but little sympathy with the sentiments of the good clergyman; and I thought, just at that moment, as I watched his countenance, that he began to discover that my dear Susan, though an accomplished and agreeable woman, was merely a woman of the world.

He was for some time silent, and the conversation assumed a more general character, till an occasion presented itself which led him again to speak. My uncle Peregrine was talking about a dissipated young man known to all the party, and was certainly, for a clergyman, not putting him-

self in a creditable point of view, when relating an adventure in which they had both played a part. My father gave him a grave but gentle rebuke, and told him that he could not consider Mr. ——— as a proper companion for a clergyman. My uncle endeavored to laugh off the imputation on his associate, and declared he was the best of fellows, had an excellent heart, but was certainly—even he thought *that*—a little too gay.

“Gay is not the word,” said my sister, “to describe the excesses of that man; and I must say, dear uncle Peregrine,”—and she smiled as she spoke,—“that the sooner you shake off such a bur—for I hear that he sticks to you like one—from your black coat, the better.”

“I quite agree with you, madam,” said Mr. Wynne, gravely, “on the abuse of that charming word, gay; and I think you would agree with my favorite poet in what he says on the same subject.”

“I have no doubt I should,” she replied, “You must shew me the lines.”

“Perhaps,” said aunt Margaret, “you may

remember them, my good sir; and if so, would kindly allow us to hear them."

"Some poetry," he replied, "fixes itself on my mind as an air of music does on that of my daughter Pamela; when once or twice heard, it returns of itself to the memory. The words are these:

"Whom call we gay! That honor has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name:
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay,
That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of day-spring overshot his humble nest;
The peasant, too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But, save me from the gaiety of those
Whose head-aches nail them to a noon-day bed;
And save me too from theirs, whose haggard eyes
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripped off by cruel chance;
From gayety, that fills the hours with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe."

"Charming!" I cried out; "that is true poetry; and I thank you, sir, with all my heart, for bringing me to the acquaintance of such an author." It was the first time that I had spoken

during the whole dinner, and my voice and manner drew the eyes of every one upon me.

"Horace is somewhat of a poet himself," said my father; "and will be pleased to find a kindred spirit in you, my dear sir."

"I shall indeed, sir," I replied; and till the ladies left the room, I was engaged either in conversation with the good clergyman, or with his daughter Pamela. I had not spoken a word to her before, though seated next her. I must own, however, I had often gazed, when unobserved, on the play of her countenance, and listened to the few remarks she made, in answer to the abrupt and sententious observations of my uncle Oliver. The mention of her love of music had made me suddenly take a deeper interest in her. I spoke to her on the subject, and was charmed by the sweetness of her voice in speaking, and still more so by the spirit of all she said.

When we joined the ladies in the drawing-room, I found that they were conversing about music; and my father, after standing in silence listening to what was said, turned to Pamela, and asked her to favor them with some music.

"I should be happy to do so," she replied, modestly, "but I have never played on a harpsichord."

"Pamela is a tolerable performer," said Mr. Wynne, "on two instruments,—the harp and the organ,—but she has had no opportunity of learning to play on the harpsichord. . We have an organ in our church in Wales, made by a self-taught village mechanic, which is really an excellent instrument ; and my daughter is our organist ; and we have a harp at home, no uncommon instrument, as you know, among the mountains of Wales. We may be allowed, I trust," he continued, "to hear some music on the harpsichord to-night."

"My granddaughter is a very creditable performer," said my father.

Olivia took her place at the harpsichord, and played a sonata of Haydn's with much taste and execution. She had been well taught ; but had not much talent for music. I could not resist reminding my father that we had one of Green's organs in the hall ; and proposed that, as it was well warmed and carpeted, we should adjourn

thither, adding, that I hoped my cousin Pamela would try the instrument. My proposal was immediately acceded to ; and perhaps the person most pleased was Pamela herself, if one might judge from her countenance. Her love of music was so great, that the idea, as she afterwards said, of hearing so fine an organ, delighted her. Not that there was anything like forwardness about her, for she was as modest as she was natural.

"Not me, if you please, sir," she said, when the instrument was opened, and my father had asked her to play : "you will play, dear father, I hope," she added, "for you have been accustomed to do so on fine instruments."

Mr. Wynne sat down, and played one of Handel's overtures in a very masterly manner. When he had concluded, he said : "Pamela shall sing to you if you would like to hear her, and accompany herself. I think you will manage it, dear child," he added : "take my place."

She looked a little frightened ; but her father's wish was instantly complied with. Pamela's playing and singing took us all by surprise. We

had never heard anything like it. The ease, the execution, the exquisite taste, were only equalled by the extraordinary sweetness and compass of her voice ; and her management of it was perhaps the most astonishing. She entered into the very spirit of the great composer, whose beautiful song, "From mighty Kings", she was singing. I found myself holding in my breath, unconsciously dreading to lose one tone of sounds so exquisitely sweet and clear :

"Such linked sweetness long drawn out."

For some minutes no one spoke ; and then the expression of astonishment and admiration burst forth simultaneously from every one but myself.

"A St. Cecilia," said my uncle Oliver to me, in an undertone,—"and did you observe her countenance ? why, sir, its expression was almost as fine as her voice,—it is genius—nothing short of genius,—that girl would make her fortune on the stage."

I had observed her countenance perhaps with a far more intense gaze than his own, and I had been too much touched to join in the plaudits of

the rest ; but I could not help exclaiming, " Barbarous !" when he spoke of the stage,—“ to talk first of St. Cecilia, and then of the stage, and of that sweet modest girl in the same breath,” I said, indignantly,—“ it is too bad. To me, half the charm of her singing is her modesty. But I agree with you, her singing is genius, and has all the ease, with all the enthusiasm, of genius about it. It seems only natural to her to sing as she does.”

Pamela was speaking with delight to my father about the tones of the organ ; it was the first time that she had ever heard so perfect an instrument. My uncle Oliver had forgotten his usual taciturnity, and rose up to ask her to sing again, paying her some high-flown compliments, quite in an unusual style for him. She thanked him very simply, and turning to her father, said : “ Shall we sing your favorite piece, father ? ” Her father assented, calling upon his son to assist them. And they sang together that magnificent composition of Handel's : “ Glory to God in the highest.” By her father's desire, she played the introductory symphony in admirable taste ; and

then her voice was heard in the beautiful recitative with which the piece commences : " There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night : and lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid." Her articulation was perfect, and every syllable of that wonderful passage of Scripture was pronounced even more distinctly than if the words had been spoken, till the chorus burst forth, and then the two other voices united their deep rich tones to her's : full and powerful as they were, her clear and liquid notes soared high above them, in the thrilling words of that the most glorious announcement that was ever made to mortal ears : " Glory to God in the highést, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men!" I had heard Handel's oratorios before ; and even that famous composition, one of the grandest which he ever produced, with all the advantages of the first performers of the day : but it never struck me before how much better such sacred words were suited to singers like Pamela, and her father and brother, than to the hired singing men and sing-

ing women of the theatre and the concert-room ; and I have ever since thought it a kind of profanity to have such words sounded forth, merely to give effect, even to the compositions of the grandest musical genius. With those whom I then heard, it was not so. They entered deeply, not only into the spirit of the composer, but felt still more deeply the reality of those inspired words. Their singing, though not an act of worship, was the earnest tribute of their hearts to the goodness and the glory of that gracious Being, whose birth into this fallen world the multitude of the heavenly host celebrated in their song of joyful adoration.

"It is almost an unrivalled piece of music," said my sister to Mr. Wynne.

"It is, indeed," he replied ; "but much as I admire the music, I still feel that I could almost desire to forget it, and to concentrate my every thought upon the glorious words. It saddens me, as it is, to think that there were no human voices on that joyful night to join the chorus of the host of heaven. He, at whose birth on earth they sang their songs of praise, came, not to die for angels,

but for us. Ah ! what a fatal proof it was, and still is, that we are altogether gone out of the way—that there is none that understandeth—that we should not only need to be taught by angels to give glory to God for that event, which concerns not them, but ourselves ; but that, from that time to this, there should be so few among us who have learnt the Angel's Song. It ought to be the subject ever uppermost in our hearts, and the employment of our whole lives, to make our words and actions the echo of that song."

He stood in silence for some moments after he had thus spoken, for no response was made by any of the party ; then turning to my father, who had drawn nigh, and had been standing next my sister listening with grave attention to his remarks ;

" May I ask," he said ; (his voice was low, but so distinct, that every earnest word was heard by all present ;) " may I ask to follow up that sacred song with a direct act and offering of prayer and praise ; and may I petition for the attendance of your whole household, not only, dear sir, those who are now present, yourself and your children, but your servants ?"

We were all taken by surprise,—a surprise as great as our admiration had been at the singing of his daughter,—all but my father, for he replied :

“Most certainly, and I thank you from my heart for the proposal ; to our shame, be it spoken, we are not accustomed to meet, as a family, to pray, though I trust and believe, that we all say our prayers in our own closets. But I am glad, my dear friend, that you are come among us to teach us our duty ; it is your office to do so, and it is right. Let us begin to-night.”

“And to-morrow morning, also, if you approve it,” said the excellent man.

“Yes, by all means,” replied my father, “every morning and every evening from henceforward,—that is, if you, my good friend, will officiate. You are the proper person. Horace,” he added, “where are you ?” I was by his side. “Horace, my dear boy, ring the bell, and desire the servants to come up to prayers—all of them. I would have all attend ; and do you see to it that they do.”

The servants came, and that night for the first

time in our lives, we all knelt down and offered up the service of family worship to Almighty God.

But before we knelt down, our good kinsman took his Bible from his pocket.

"If you will be seated," he said gravely, "I will read to you before we pray a short portion of the Holy Bible; we will hear with all reverence what the Lord has spoken to us before we devoutly speak to Him."

He did so, making no remark or comment of his own that night. His deep melodious voice and the calm but earnest feeling with which he read the words of the sacred volume, seemed to spread a spirit of reverence, amounting almost to awe, over the whole throng, and to prepare our minds for the solemn exercise of prayer which followed. Immediately after he retired, attended by his son Hugh, to his own chamber, and aunt Margaret took charge of Pamela. The strangers seemed to have risen greatly in the estimation of our family circle ever since their arrival. My dear father, in reply to some remark that was made by my uncle Oliver, as to his surprise on finding them

so superior to anything that he had expected, said with his usual air of quiet authority :

“I am not surprised, Oliver, except by the extraordinary musical talents of that sweet child. I expected to find in our good cousin no commonplace person. A man is not necessarily a vulgar, ill-bred person, because he is poor as to worldly circumstances, and a country parson, and because the greater portion of his life has been passed in retirement. His father, let me tell you,—and I remember him well,—was one of the finest gentlemen in the land ; and sprung from one of the first families in Wales ; but, unlike his son, he was a dissipated and extravagant man. He ruined his fortune by his excesses, and left his son almost in poverty. His mother was a noble creature, though of inferior rank—the daughter of a poor Welch clergyman. She was left a widow at an early age, and was then so good-looking and had such sweet manners, that she received several proposals of marriage, which would have raised her still higher in society ; but she was a good mother, and a pious woman, and retired to her father’s parsonage in Wales, husbanding her small re-

sources, that she might be able to send her son to college; and with the assistance of her father, who was a learned man, attending herself to the training of her son in his earlier years.

“My own worthy father sent the boy to Westminster school, and he once passed his holidays at this house, but I was on the grand tour at the time, and so did not see him. My father always corresponded with him by letter; and at his death, by his desire, I continued to write to him occasionally, that the acquaintance might be kept up. It is odd enough, that we have never met till now.”

CHAPTER III.

*She is there, the long-departed,
Lovely as of old, and mild,
With her looks of sweet affection,
Smiling on her lonely child."

TO MY MOTHER'S PICTURE.

ONE morning, a day or two after the arrival of the Wynnes, it was a lovely autumn day, and I had been walking with Mr. Wynne and Pamela in the broad walk, whose thick pleached hedge, a wall of living green, affords a shelter from the cold winds. The pleasant sunshine had given a summer warmth to the air, and Mr. Wynne sat down to rest in the alcove. Pamela had quitted us for a few minutes ; she had gone at her father's request to fetch one of the volumes of Cowper ; he wished me to read the passage on popular applause, and the lines which follow, in which the poet complains of the preference given by many who live in the full light of the gospel dispensation, to the sages of Greece and Rome, showing

how necessarily defective their most enlightened teaching was to that of the humblest follower of Christ.

While Pamela was absent, my attention was drawn to the sound of voices near us; they proceeded from the other side of the thick yew hedge, and we could not avoid hearing them, and even many of the words. As I soon discovered, my uncle Peregrine had met aunt Margaret; he had left his horse in the stables, having ridden over from his rectory. He had been calling, it seems, at Norman Court, my sister's place; and I also supposed, from what he said, that good aunt Margaret, full of her admiration of our guests, had been asking him, if my sister Susan was not as much pleased with them as herself.

"Not in the least," he cried. "She does not like them; Susan and myself are the only two sharp-sighted ones in the family; they are an artful set, the whole of them; and Susan agrees with me, that the demand for family prayers was a most uncalled for liberty in another person's house."

Whether Mr. Wynne heard the whole of this

or no, I cannot tell ; but he instantly rose up, as did I, without making a remark, though I saw that his usually pale face was dyed with a deep crimson. Passing his arm within mine, he said, with a perfect command of voice and manner :

“ We will walk, if you please, and meet my daughter ; she is long in coming.”

I had been struck dumb with shame and with vexation ; and to make the matter worse, no sooner did I recover a little, than I began, and hesitated as I did so, to express my indignant displeasure at what we had heard. He looked at me with a beautiful smile, and gently pressing my arm to his side :

“ The words are as if forgotten,” he said ; “ they were never meant for my ear. I have lived longer in the world than you have, my dear young friend ; and can tell you that such remarks are only too natural. Indeed I am not displeased. No,” he added, observing, doubtless, the expression of distress upon my countenance : “ I promise you that I will not even feel hurt. It is not,” he said gravely, “ with myself that offence has been taken ; there is another and a higher Being whose

unacknowledged claims I feel I am constrained to advocate ; and it is because I have spoken in His name, that my conduct has met with disapproval : I trust we shall see that He is honored, though I may be lightly esteemed ; and for this, with all my heart, I shall pray."

"This then is religion," I said to myself. "How lovely it is ! And there is reality here. What a curb it puts upon the temper. How it turns the sour in our nature to sweetness, and anger into love and tender compassion." From that moment, I loved that man and his spirit from my heart ; and a bond was unconsciously formed between us, which has never since been broken ; for though his body is now in the grave, we, I trust, are one in Christ, and shall meet to know and love one another in heaven, as we have done on earth.

Pamela met us, as we entered the house. "You are coming in," she said ; and her father answered, as was the truth, "the air is becoming rather chilly."

"May I ask you," said I, "to come with me to the cedar parlor, which is the warmest and

pleasantest room in the house? You said you would like to see the family pictures that hang there, especially that of my honored grandfather; and I wish to show you my own dear mother's picture, which hangs in that room."

"And there my father can read to you," said Pamela, "the passage from the book I have brought."

I hastened them thither, for I heard my uncle Peregrine's voice, who had entered the house by the back door, and was loud in conversation about some poaching affair in my father's justice's room; and I felt that a meeting just at that time would be anything but pleasant to ourselves. When we were in the room, and I had shut the door, I insisted on Mr. Wynne's resting for some little time before he looked at the pictures, and said that I would read to myself the passage in Cowper, to which he had directed my attention. He opened the volume, and begged me to read the noble lines with which the poet introduces his remarks on the ancient philosophers, beginning with the lines—

"He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech," &c. &c.

I could not have been in a better frame to consider the grand subject thus brought before me. The sentiments of that Christian poet were made, in fact, those of a teacher of the gospel to me. My heart began to assent to the great argument which he urged, and my judgment to approve it. As I closed the volume, after reading some pages, I said: "May I venture to ask you to lend me this book? There is a freshness of thought about this poetry, and a vivacity of style, which gives to every subject the writer touches upon all the charm of originality; and I am struck by the skillful way in which he passes

'From grave to gay, from lively to severe.'

He will be, I foresee, a very popular poet."

"His poetry, however," said Mr. Wynne, "has been described in one of our most popular reviews as utterly commonplace. One thing I admire in it is, that he is evidently himself a Christian, loving and embracing the plain doctrines of the

holy Bible ; and that, however lively he may be in parts of his poems, he is, to use his own words, 'always serious in a serious cause.' You shall keep the volume as long as you please, my young friend. I think that you are one who will find both pleasure and profit from its contents. Is that your mother's portrait?" he said, after a pause, in which his eyes were fixed upon it. "It has attracted my gaze since I have been sitting here ; but I am almost sure it is, from the likeness to your sister. What a charming picture, and what an expression of gentleness and peace there is in that lovely countenance ! Were you old enough to recollect her when she was taken from you ?"

"I was a mere child when she died," I said : "but so far as my experience goes, I should say that a mother, and such a mother as mine was, can never be forgotten by her child. There is a dimness, the dimness of the distance, over many persons and things in that period of our life ; but the sweet looks and tender caresses of my mother are as clearly and as vividly recalled as if they were of yesterday. I love to look upon that

picture; and, sometimes, when my eyes are fixed upon it, I almost think that I can look it into life, and that I shall hear some words of sweet affection from those lips: they seem about to open, and the smile to increase round them."

Mr. Wynne took up the volume of Cowper.

"There are some lines here," he said, "which will possess peculiar interest with you. While you were speaking about your mother's picture, they occurred to me."

He read the exquisite poem written by the author on the receipt of his mother's picture. And, before he had concluded, tears had risen to my eyes, and were trickling unheeded over my face. And thus it was that we were drawn together, and that I began to know and love the most valued friend whom I have ever possessed on earth. Thus, also, I began to feel that I had met, for the first time in my life, one who understood me, and could enter into my own feelings. Every succeeding day strengthened this impression; and it was not long before I learnt that I had found in him a guide well fitted to counsel and direct me at a time when my principles were

unformed, and my opinions, on many subjects of the highest importance, mistaken, or unsound. Now, as I sit here, an aged and experienced man, and retrace the course of my long life, and remember how much I learnt in my intercourse with him, both from his precepts and his example, I feel that few men have been ever blest with such a friend. One thing was remarkable almost from the commencement of our intimacy,—that he never wished me to take up any opinion because it was his, or to hold any principle, or pursue any course of action on his authority. He referred all to the Word of God,—that was his oracle, and his sole standard of authority. He pointed out to me what God has declared in the holy Scriptures: and “Is it possible,” he would say, “that we can do better, when God has given us rules and directions purposely for our instruction, than to regulate our conduct by them? Is it not the proof of a sad perversion, when we do not?”

All this was new to me. The Bible itself was as an unknown book. I had never made myself really acquainted with its contents. We were, what is usually called, a family of the highest

respectability. We were seldom absent from church on the Sunday morning, or afternoon; for in those days, the rector of our parish holding two livings, and residing during the greater part of the year in London, his curate performed the services alternately in the two parishes, which were six miles apart. I had been educated at one of our great public schools; and had resided some terms at Cambridge; but how, and why it was, I could scarcely tell, the Word of God had been a neglected book in the instruction and education which I had received. One or two portions of the New Testament, I should say of the Gospels, had made some impression upon my mind. I remembered them as having been read to me by my dear mother; and the impression they then made has since appeared to me a proof that there is that in the mind of a child which renders it peculiarly susceptible of such impressions. But I remembered them chiefly from their association with her gentle affection, and only as affecting stories which had presented the character of our Lord Jesus Christ in a lovely point of view to me. I had heard the lessons read at church, but had

paid as little attention to them as I had to the rest of the service, or to the dull sermons which followed, and which, instead of creating an interest in the Word of God, tended rather to take away any little interest which that Word might have awakened. In my own home, the holy Bible was never opened by me, except when I wished to look for the ages of some of the family, whose births were duly recorded upon the fly-leaves at the commencement, when the tears often filled my eyes as I read : "Olivia, the beloved wife of John Somerville, married on the 9th of June, 17—, died on the 6th of December, 17—." There was a bible in my father's justice room, but I fear its only use was when a witness was to be sworn upon it. Aunt Margaret certainly read the Psalms and the lessons daily ; but, as she afterwards told me, rather as a formal task and an accustomed duty, than from any real interest or enjoyment in doing so. Was it to be wondered at that religion was associated with nothing of importance or delight in my mind ? Alas ! the only clergymen with whom I was at all acquainted were my uncle Peregrine, Mr. Stone,

our dull and inefficient curate, and my college tutor, Mr. Y——, who was known to be a Socinian, though a clergyman in orders, in the church of England, a man of elegant manners, and first-rate talents, but who gave himself very little concern about religion. Such a case, alas! was not uncommon then.

In Mr. Wynne I saw not only a Christian, but a minister of the gospel,—earnest, humble-minded, kind, gentle, and courteous,—I saw in fact a higher order of man than any I had been accustomed to meet. There was a simple grandeur and elevation of mind about him which I afterwards understood ought to belong to the ministerial character, but with which I was totally unacquainted till I knew him. He moved in a higher parallel, and took higher ground than other men; and this would have been insupportable in any one had it not been accompanied, as it was in him, by an unaffected humility and a dignified consistency which constrained me to acknowledge the reality of his religion. I saw in fact in his whole conduct and carriage the natural effect of the strong inward workings of vital godly principle. You are not to

suppose, my reader, that these reflections were made by me at the time when I first became acquainted with this admirable man. If they suggested themselves at all, it was almost unconsciously. All that I felt was the attractive charm of his conversation,—nay, of his very presence. I believe I am not mistaken in saying, that till he came among us, my own pursuits were certainly of a higher character than those of my family and friends. I lived much alone among my books, and was not satisfied with the unintellectual and half-educated minds around me; and I was taken by surprise to find in this secluded country clergyman a man of superior mind and education to my own; one who was willing to make me his companion, and whom I could not associate with for an hour without receiving some new idea, or being struck by some observation, which proved that he possessed a richly furnished mind, and a real refinement of taste. God was merciful indeed to me in so ordering it, that at so critical a period of my life, He should have brought to me a teacher and a friend to whom, by His Divine grace, I may truly say I owe the salvation of my soul, and the

turning of my feet into that way which leadeth to everlasting life. To refer to his own beautiful idea on the first night of his arrival among us,—it was from him I learnt that the whole course and conduct of the Christian life ought to be the echo of the Angels' Song ; to give glory to God in the highest ; to spread peace on earth, and to show goodwill towards men. Such was the whole course of His life at whose birth, the angels of heaven sung that glorious song. He who said : " I come to do Thy will, O my God," His course on earth was the perfect manifestation of the fulfilment of that angelic strain. The more closely I have considered the course of His humble-minded follower, the more deeply has this been impressed upon me, that the Angels' Song was the grand theme to which his heart had as an instrument been tuned by a Divine hand, and that his actions were like chords responding continually to that celestial harmony.

Some weeks afterwards, when we were conversing together alone ; when I had been led to open my whole heart to him, and told him, with tears, how much I owed to him,—yea, even my

own soul also, he replied : " It is so, my friend ; but it is only in your case as it was in mine ; the same gracious God who sent me to you, gave me also a friend when I was in a far more awful state than you were when we first met, for I was then an ordained minister of the gospel."

He then related to me some circumstances of the event to which he alluded. You, my reader, will rejoice, I have no doubt, to learn more of the early history of this remarkable man ; and therefore I shall transcribe it here, praying that whether you are a minister of Christ or not, you may remember that you are, by outward profession at least, a member of His Church, and that you may derive some benefit to your own immortal soul from the short narrative which is the subject of my next chapter.

I give the story almost in his own words. I was so much struck with it, that I wrote it down on the same evening before I retired to rest.

CHAPTER IV.

Be a pastor—be an angel—

Faithful to thy glorious trust ;

Seek the sheep, and preach the gospel

To them, ere they turn to dust.

Ere these deathless souls are summoned

To confront thee, face to face,

And the hireling's sentence sinks thee

Down to hell—the hireling's place.

“ YOU will not wonder that I refer so frequently to the Angels' Song, when you have heard my story.

“ I was curate in the parish of L——, in Westmoreland. I had entered upon the life of a minister of Christ, the profession which I had chosen, and for which I had been educated ; but I had at that time derived little comfort or enjoyment from the life I led.

“ There are few characters more pitiable than that of a trifler ; and few triflers so contemptible as the man who is by profession a pastor of

Christ's flock, but who is in truth a mere hireling, caring not for the sheep. I was one of them. It was Christmas Eve: I had been passing the evening with a company of thoughtless revellers at L—— Hall. The house was filled with guests, and old Sir Andrew Vere, who prided himself on keeping up what is called the old English character of hospitality, had kept the Christmas Eve with all the quaint festivities of the olden time. The yule log had been lighted; there had been much boisterous merriment and romping; much eating and drinking; and the gentlemen had left the dining-room at an earlier hour than usual, but not till many of them had drunk almost to intoxication, to join the dance in the servants' hall. The ladies were already assembled there. It was one of those occasions, almost the only one in the year, when a freedom of manners, inseparable perhaps from an association of such a character, was allowed, and, by some of the party, seemed to be enjoyed. For my own part I must confess, that though I had laughed as loudly as any one, and danced with as much appearance of hilarity with the partner to whom the old knight had introduced

me, (who was one of his own kitchen maids,) my mirth had been forced. I was naturally too fastidious to be able to find enjoyment in such diversions ; but I said to myself, these are good old English customs, and the knight is a fine specimen of an old English gentleman ; and surely it is well that on an occasion like this, the rich and the poor should meet together, and the conventional distinctions of rank should be forgotten.

“ At a late hour I was alone in my study. I wished to read over my sermon for the next day ; and I sat down with no little complacency to give the finishing touches to my sermon. I prided myself at that time on my graceful style, and well-turned sentences. I was much admired as a preacher : my sermons were flowery, and written for effect. I loved to appeal to the feelings of my hearers ; and when I saw the handkerchiefs of the ladies raised to their eyes, and received at the conclusion of the service the flattering encomiums on what was called my beautiful discourse, I left the church perfectly satisfied with myself. I had obtained the object I had in view.

“ That night I was arrested for the first time

in my career of self-delusion and perilous trifling. A letter lay on the table, which I had not noticed when I first entered. It was from one who had been my college friend. His sister had sent it me after his death; and I read that letter with very serious feelings. I saw before me the last words of that beloved friend; of one who was no longer an inhabitant of this earth, and whom I should never again behold on this side the grave. He had been, like myself, a clergyman: we had been ordained at the same time, but had seldom met since that day, our spheres of duty lying far apart, though in the same diocese. I fear, had we been enabled to recognize the voice of God on that occasion, we should have heard these awful words: 'Go back; I called thee not!' Not that we had looked for preferment in the Church; but we had, I believe, chosen that sacred profession partly to escape the hard labor which a man must necessarily undergo who would maintain a respectable position in any other learned profession; partly because we desired a life of leisure, and elegant retirement.

"The letter of my friend startled me. 'I am

a dying man,' he wrote. 'When you read these words, the hand that writes them will be motionless and rigid in the grave. The spirit that gives expression to my feelings and my thoughts will have passed to its account. You did not, ah! why did you not, reply to my last letter? You cannot answer this; you can never write to me again; it is now too late! but you will perhaps give heed to the words I write when I am dead, though I fear you despised them when I was alive on the earth. We have been young and careless together, and we took upon us the vows of our sacred profession in so light-minded a spirit, that it was not likely any blessing could attend our ministrations. I have been early stopped in my vain, and I might almost say unhallowed, course. It is well for me that I was so arrested; —that I was led to think, to turn, to repent, to cry for pardon and for grace, and to devote the little time that God has given me to earnest and diligent exertions in His vineyard. Was it not so, my friend? for my time has been short indeed. The sands of my mortal life are running down fast. I am not yet eight-and-twenty, but I am a

dying man ! Alas, I laid my hand, like him of old, rashly and profanely on the ark ! You did the same ; and yet we were not smitten ! I have had time to seek and find a full, free pardon, and a peace, the exquisite blessedness of which no words of mine can describe. You may be spared long. Oh ! my friend, let us not part for ever. I trust that God will hear my prayer, and lead you to seek Him, as He has led me. Perhaps these few words from the heart of your dying friend may be the means He will use to effect this. I had looked forward to meeting you this Christmas. Notwithstanding your late coldness and entire neglect of me, I was about to invite myself to pass a few weeks with you in your warm and sheltered parsonage, and in your more genial climate. The air has proved too keen for me among these high and desolate hills ; the snow is already lying upon their ridges ; and I hear that winter has not yet set in on your side of the diocese. But I was obliged to give up all thoughts of my projected journey. When Christmas has come to you, I trust I shall be singing the song of Moses and the Lamb in the better land. You

have another song to sing. How fervently I pray, that while you remain on earth, your life may be one continued illustration of that glorious song sung by the angels on the birth of Christ our Lord into this ruined world! 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.' It was last Christmas that these words made for the first time a deep impression upon my heart. I was preparing to preach upon them; and while I was pondering, it pleased God to make me feel their grave importance, and how long I had been as one who had never learnt the Angels' Song. Those few remarkable words were the announcement of the entrance of our divine Redeemer into a world which would have been lost but for His coming. They were the revelation of the purpose of God, and made plain that glorious purpose. There were few on earth to welcome their great Deliverer; and few, comparatively speaking, have learnt this heavenly hymn. Have you, my friend, yet learnt it? I would ask you to pause upon the first clause. May it not be said, that it resembles the first and great commandment? He who would desire to give 'glory

to God in the highest' must learn to love the Lord his God with all his'

Here the letter suddenly was broken off. A few words were added by another hand.

" 'I know it was my brother's wish that this letter should be sent to you. He did not live to complete it. The pen fell from his fingers, and he fainted from exhaustion while writing the last words. He rallied for a few days, but he was not able to resume his pen. His end was peace; and we all feel that death to him was a great gain, for Christ had become his life while he was on earth.'

"There was no signature to this postscript. But I knew the handwriting, and I recognized the spirit of that gentle but strong-minded sister of my departed friend, whom I had occasionally seen, and who had been the nurse of her dying brother. She was many years his senior, and had been, as I afterwards learnt, chiefly instrumental to his great change. For some years previous to our ordination, she had been a consistent Christian; the only one in her family. Her peculiarities,—for such they deemed them,—had exposed her to

much contempt and ridicule, but she had kept on her course with a quiet meekness, which they at last learnt to appreciate and to respect. She was then a widow ; and after following her husband to the grave, she had been called to attend her brother in his last hours. Her devoted attentions to him, led to an illness from which she did not recover. I never saw either herself or her brother again.

“That night was made by God the turning point of my whole life. The current was stopped, and turned I humbly trust in a new and heavenward direction. It was to me, as it was to those shepherds on the same eventful night,—to me, an unwatchful shepherd, to whom the Lord had entrusted, not sheep, but the souls of men, that the same announcement was made as for the first time ; not by the angels of heaven, but by one who was a true *αγγελος*, or messenger, of His gracious word on earth. And he, as it were, had also faded away and passed from earth to heaven, after I had heard, as from his lips, the same glorious song,—that song, the theme of which he had called on me to make the occupation of my future life on earth.”

CHAPTER V.

"Christ the wisdom of God"—1 Cor. i. 24.

A DAY or two after the arrival of our guests, my sister and her husband had been summoned to Bath, to attend the marriage of one of Colonel Wyndham's brothers. They were afterwards absent on a short tour in Devonshire. My uncle Peregrine was a less frequent visitor than usual at Westhall; and when he came, there was a constrained and ungracious manner about him towards the Wynne party, which, from the first, was evident enough to me; and which, I own, made me extremely indignant. My father at length perceived it, and spoke to him plainly on the subject. My uncle being twenty years younger than himself, and left under his guardianship, had been compelled, till he came of age, to submit to his authority; and my father did not hesitate to admonish him whenever he disapproved of his conduct, which, I am sorry to say, he had

too frequent reason to do. He was at that time but an indifferent clergyman, but was apt to excuse himself for various inconsistencies and neglects of duty, by declaring, that he had entered the Church against his own consent, and that no choice had been given him, after my uncle Oliver had refused to accept the family living, but to take it himself, or give up the only means he had of living like a gentleman. What passed between him and my father on the subject of Mr. Wynne, I knew not; but there was a visible improvement in his manner. He came again as usual to Westhall, and after a time, seemed to get over his dislike to Mr. Wynne, and even told me, that though he had been prejudiced against him at first, he thought he was really a good kind of man and a perfect gentleman.

Mr. Stone, the curate of our parish, was accustomed to dine at Westhall on those Sundays when the service occurred in the afternoon, and to remain with us until the Monday morning. On the first Sunday that he came after the arrival of our guests, he preferred a petition to Mr. Wynne to take his place in the pulpit; but my father

interposed, saying, that he could not consent to his taking any duty till his health was more re-established. He made, however, such particular inquiries as to our cousin's health whenever he came, that one Sunday my father laughed and said :

" Well, my good sir, I think we may withdraw the interdiction which I placed upon you, and answer your inquiry according to your wishes, by saying, that my worthy cousin Mr. Wynne is, I rejoice to see, so much better, that I think we might venture to ask him to assist you in taking part with you in Divine Service next Sunday.

" I shall be glad to do so," said Mr. Wynne, with a grave courteousness. " I know scarcely a greater privilege than that of preaching the tidings of eternal life."

We were all pleased by his consenting ; but no one seemed so much pleased as Mr. Stone, which made me think more highly of him than I had done before : but I was sorry afterwards to discover that his pleasure proceeded rather from being spared the trouble of preaching, than from any more exalted motive. But, alas ! his utter

Indifference was at times too apparent in everything. He was one of those characters who, to a common observer, appear to be humble; but his humility was very different from that of Mr. Wynne, and consisted rather in a kind of good-natured servility. He had a compliment ready for every one. Poor man, he met with much affliction in his latter years, and became an altered character.

We were rather astonished on the following Sunday by finding my brother-in-law, Colonel Wyndham, in our pew. We did not know till then that the Wyndhams had returned home. Susan, he told us, had gone to her parish church. Mr. Stone took the first part of the service, but was assisted by Mr. Wynne at the Communion-table, who, as I said before, had undertaken to preach the sermon. That sermon I shall never forget. The holy gravity of his appearance impressed me before he spoke. But when he entered upon his subject, my attention was riveted; and though the sermon was longer than any that I had heard before, it seemed to me, when he concluded, the shortest I had ever heard. It was all new to me;

and as deeply interesting as it was new. The earnestness of the preacher ; the simple arrangement of his subject, one point so suggestive of the point that next presented itself ; the plain forcible English, almost every word a good common English word which the poor and uneducated class could understand ; the style at the same time so lucid and even elegant, that the most fastidious scholar would have been charmed with it ; and, above all, the affectionate spirit, amounting at times even to tenderness,—all this was new to me from the pulpit. It was a written sermon, but it was not read as the sermons I had before heard. The hearer felt that the minister was speaking to him. The subject was new to me, for I had scarcely looked into the Bible, as I before mentioned. It was the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. Two or three leading points recur to my mind as I write :—"She had heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord ; and when she came, she communed with him of all that was in her heart ; and Solomon told her all her questions ; there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not."

"A greater than Solomon is here," he said. 'You may come to Him, even if you are among the poorest and the lowest in rank, and find even a more gracious reception than the queen of the south met with from the royal Solomon. You may commune with Him of all that is in your heart; and He will dispel all your doubts, and answer all your difficulties. He will enter into all your feelings. He is touched with a feeling of all your infirmities. There is not anything hid from Him. He was the fountain from whence all the wisdom of Solomon came. Again, she said to the king: 'It was a true report that I heard in my own land, of thy acts and of thy wisdom; howbeit, I believed not the words until I came; and mine eyes had seen it; and behold the half was not told me.' A greater than Solomon is here! Make but acquaintance with Him, and you shall say from your own blessed experience, it was a true report that I heard; but I believed not till I came to Him; and behold the half was not told me! Oh, let me assure you that it is always thus. Who has ever come to Him, and been deceived in his expectation? It was thus with those Samari-

tans who came to Christ: 'Now we believe,' they said; 'not because of thy saying;' (addressing themselves to her at whose report they had come out to meet him;) 'we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

"Again, she said: 'Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.' 'A greater than Solomon is here'! And if you would know true happiness,—that calm, assured, and settled happiness, which nothing can disturb, and which shall change the whole character of your existence,—giving you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, you will find it, and only find it, in the presence and in the service of Christ. Happy indeed are His servants. He calls them not servants, but friends,—nay, as many as receive Him, to them He giveth power to be called the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Himself. Yet bear it ever on your mind that you cannot come to Christ as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon. She came on terms of

equality,—even as one royal sovereign to another, she came in all the splendor of her royalty. You can only come in all the degradation of your guilt and misery. But though a greater than Solomon in all his glory is here, even the King of kings, you may come,—you are even invited to come as a poor trembling sinner. But come, only come ; come at once. You have nothing to dread if you come : your danger—your great, your only, your inevitable danger, is, if you do not come.”

My reader may say there was nothing remarkable in these words. It may be so ; but we must take into consideration the state of the hearer's mind, as well as the words of the preacher. It was all new to me. For the first time in my life I heard the plain gospel from a preacher in earnest, and at the time when my own mind was awakening to a sense of my sinful neglect of my own soul, my guilty and unthankful rejection of that Divine and gracious Saviour who had come down from heaven to earth to die for me. The same gospel from the most ungifted preacher would probably have had the same effect upon me at that time. I was not, however, the only per-

son then present that was deeply, and, I trust, savingly impressed by that sermon. The preacher had truly said, in another part of his address, that she who came to Solomon could only hear of wisdom from his lips; but he who comes to Christ, comes to one who gives wisdom,—for “the Lord giveth wisdom.”

“My dear young friend,” said Mr. Wynne to me afterwards, when I was asking him many questions about that sermon, “I would say to you in the words of the wise man: ‘Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her, for she is thy life.’ The fear of the Lord,” he added, “is the beginning of wisdom. The knowledge of Christ, when He is really made of God, wisdom to your soul, is the sum of all wisdom, for Christ is the wisdom of God.”

“But how am I to get wisdom?” I said.

He opened his Bible and read: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”

CHAPTER VI.

Be a herald,—be a watchman,—
Golden seasons God will give :
Seek them, seize them, and improve them ;
Some will hear, believe and live.

Go, proclaim thy great-Redeemer ;
Speak at once, the moments fly :
Tell the Lord, he died to save them,—
Lives, and pleads for them on high.

ON the following morning my father rode over to Norman Court, saying, when he left us, that he should probably bring the Wyndhams and Peregrine back with him to spend the week with us ; but instead of returning himself, we were alarmed at the appearance of his groom coming at full gallop down the west avenue. We all rushed to the door, and the man seeing us there, rode up to deliver his message. Colonel Wyndham, he said, had been thrown from his horse, and killed on the spot,—at least, so they feared, for he had neither spoken nor moved when the groom

left the house. My father had sent for aunt Margaret to come to my sister, who was, the man said, in a terrible state. The doctor had not arrived, but he had met him within a mile of Norman Court. The coach was coming up to the door, where aunt Margaret stood, with the tears trickling down her face, waiting to set off, when my uncle Peregrine was seen approaching, also at full gallop. He brought the joyful news that the poor colonel was yet alive : the doctor had bled him, and consciousness had returned. His arm had been broken, and some severe injury, they feared, had been received about the head ; it was impossible, however, to tell to what extent. But the circumstance of the accident to his arm had given them some hope that the violence of the shock to the head had been broken. He had spoken, but his first coherent words had been to ask for Mr. Wynne ; and my sister and father had joined in the entreaty that he would come immediately.

I need not dwell further upon the joyful fact of my brother-in-law's recovery ; but the circumstance of his calling for Mr. Wynne, and the many

interviews which he had with that excellent man, are some of the links in that chain of mysterious but wonderful events by which it pleased our gracious God to bring many members of a family, to whom He had long been unknown, to Himself.

Colonel Wyndham had not been a party to the prejudice and dislike felt by his wife and her uncle against Mr. Wynne, and had expressed his disapprobation of the censure they had passed upon him. He had said but little, however, except to declare his unqualified approval of all that he had seen and heard of that excellent man. Mr. Wynne remained at Norman Court for some days, and was admitted from time to time to the chamber of the invalid, who received the greatest comfort from his ministrations. It was, however, about a month after his accident, when sitting by the couch of Colonel Wyndham, that I heard more than I expected, and learnt the reason of his desiring so earnestly to see Mr. Wynne.

About twenty years before, when he had been quartered in the North of England, he had been detained some weeks by illness at an inn in the town of M——. While he was sitting one even-

ing lonely and dispirited in his room, having been confined to his bed for several previous days, the landlord of the inn came to him, and said that he had brought a message from a clergyman who had arrived at the house that day, and was about to leave by the mail at an early hour on the following morning. The message was an invitation to attend the service of family prayer, which he had begged that he might be permitted to conduct for all the inmates of the inn. The landlord, it seemed, was almost as astonished as the young officer by the strangeness of the proposition; but his wife and one of the waiters had expressed their delight, the man said, in lively terms, at the proposal. "And you see," added the landlord, "I suppose there can be no harm in it; and nothing would satisfy my wife but that I should go to all the rooms and give a respectful invitation to all the ladies and gentlemen in our house. The old gentleman in No. 6 is very angry, and two ladies in No. 3 (the next room to your own) would hardly hear me speak, and sent a very rude message to the good minister, which my wife forbids me to give; but our other gentlefolks are highly pleased

at the thought of attending; and my wife has had a fire made in the assembly room, where we are to meet in about an hour's time."

The colonel told me that at first he had made no reply; but that the good landlady, who, it seems, was at the door, then made her appearance, saying: "I am sure, sir, you would like to come. After being so poorly as you have been, and almost at death's door, I dare to say you will feel it quite a comfort to hear a fine piece of Scripture read, and to join in thanking God for your recovery; this, I am sure, we shall all do, for I have felt as much anxiety about you as if you were my own son; and I have been telling this good clergyman how very ill you have been."

"I was fairly taken by storm," said the colonel; "and though feeling shy and annoyed, and half inclined to give as decided a refusal as the old gentleman in No. 6, I felt that there was so much of truth and reason in the good woman's argument, that I could not for very shame refuse: and when the time came, I made one of the little congregation who met together in the assembly room. I was charmed by the appearance of the

good man. The portion of Scripture which he read to us was admirably chosen, and the few remarks that followed were plain and striking. I had forgotten them till the night that I met Mr. Wynne for the first time at Westhall, and then a few words touched the electric chord of memory, and the whole scene, many of his remarks, and the subject of the prayer, returned almost in the freshness with which they had presented to me in the inn. The few words I allude to were these: 'Have you learnt the Angels' Song?' I had before some confused recollection of him; but age and sickness have altered him strangely; for twenty years ago, though there was then that air of peculiar refinement, and that gentle dignity, which now distinguish him, he was in the prime of manhood; his hair black, and his skin clear and ruddy. When, however, I sat among the assembled household at Westhall, and looked at him intently with the open Bible before him, and heard again the distinct and melodious tones of his voice as he read the inspired words, I at once remembered when and where I had before seen him. I had been already struck, to say the

truth; an unconscious awakening of mind had taken place within me, by the boldness,—I will call it by its proper name,—the holy boldness of his zeal for the glory of God, in requesting the squire to assemble the whole family to prayer on the very evening of his arrival. It was like the spirit of the clergyman at the inn. I thank God for this holy boldness; which you, dear Susan," he said, smiling, as he turned to his wife, "and your uncle Peregrine, have so strongly censured. Had I died, my poor wife," he added, with an earnest gravity, "from the effects of that fall, I should have owed the salvation of my soul, as I trust I now do, to the holy boldness of this noble-minded minister of Christ. The words of Scripture which he read to us that night at Westhall, followed, as they were, by his prayer for the grace of God to bless them, made so deep an impression upon me, that they led me, for the first time in my life, to search the Scriptures for myself, and to ask that solemn question: 'What must I do to be saved?'"

"This is all new to me," said Susan. She

was very thoughtful, and the tears were in her eyes. "Why did you not tell me all this?"

"Perhaps," said he, "my dear wife, because I am wanting in that holy boldness for which Mr. Wynne is so remarkable. You know, however, that though a soldier, I am a man of peace; and when I found you and Peregrine so decided in your dislike of that admirable man, and somewhat impatient of any remonstrance of mine on the subject, I thought it as well to leave you to yourselves till you came to a better mind; and I kept my thoughts to myself."

"Ah, well, my dear Charles," she replied, "I must maintain you have not dealt fairly by me. As for uncle Peregrine, you were at liberty to do as you pleased about him. I am sure I do not admire his standard of clerical duty or excellence,—that is if he has any,—for, as I often tell him, he is not fit for a clergyman, and never ought to have been one;—but your own wife has a claim upon you for good advice, and for being set to rights too, when you see her in the wrong. I begin to think almost as highly of Mr. Wynne as you do; and I really love him for his affectionate

attention to you, and because I see you love him. But on one point I still differ : I do not think his judgment was the best in the world in coming down upon our whole party that first evening at Westhall with family prayer. He was wanting in tact, to say the best of it. Why, Charles, you know as well as I do what sort of people they all are there : my dear excellent father, and that good simple soul aunt Margaret, and that most methodical of old bachelors, that taciturn uncle of mine, Oliver ; to say nothing of the old servants, the stately Mrs. Peters, and that model of butlers and most prejudiced of men, dear old Toogood. Now suppose, just suppose,—I do not say that it was so,—but suppose that they all, one and all, had been of the mind of uncle Peregrine and myself,—put uncle Peregrine out of the question again, if you please ; but you know, Charles, I am not a prejudiced person—I hate prejudice,—but suppose they had all taken offence, why then, dear Mr. Wynne, instead of doing good, would have caused a revolution in the whole household.”

“ But facts, Susan, are the best arguments, and I put the actual effect of Mr. Wynne’s con-

duct over against your suppositions. There are occasions, and that, in his opinion, I have no doubt, was one of them, when high principle and duty to God must take place of the wisest worldly policy ; and God, who will honor those that honor Him, may, and does, it seems, overrule such occasions, and causes His faithful servant to find favor in the eyes of men. The fact is, that Mr. Wynne, instead of causing a revolution against him among the household at Westhall, has excited one in his favor, and has been the means of producing a desire in many hearts to become truly religious ; and among his chief partisans are Peters and Toogood. Horace has been just giving me an account of the warm attachment of the servants at Westhall to Mr. Wynne and his children."

While we were thus conversing, Mr. Wynne entered. He was scarcely seated when my sister said to him : "It is never too late to acknowledge a fault, and I have to acknowledge one : I have to tell you, my dear sir, and to ask your forgiveness as I do so, that I have spoken in an unworthy and improper manner against you, and that I am the more ashamed of having done so because I led

you to suppose by my manner that I entertained a very friendly feeling towards you. I ought to have said this long ago, but I could not summon courage to do so. Though I knew you could not be aware of my state of feeling, I have felt very guilty whenever I have met you. I am sure you will forgive me, and help me to become a very different creature, and more worthy of this good husband of mine, who knew how to value you when I did not."

I fixed my eye on Mr. Wynne while she was speaking ; but whether he understood my glance or not I could not tell, for he took no notice of it, but only spoke to my sister in his usually calm and dignified manner, yet with great kindness. She was much agitated for a short time, but soon recovered her self-possession ; and then, to my astonishment, she said in her usual tone : " Will you allow me to say that I did not think you quite judicious, though I am now sure that you were right, in proposing family prayer at Westhall on the evening of your arrival ? I am the more surprised now I know you, because I really think that you are as judicious as you are kind."

“My dear madam,” he said gravely, “I cheerfully reply to your inquiry. I can never forget the high commission which I bear. To use inspired words: ‘I have been allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel,’ and therefore I must speak, ‘not as pleasing men, but God.’ On such occasions as the one you refer to, I have always endeavored to realize the unspeakable importance of the present opportunity. I have not permitted myself to think that to-morrow can present a better opportunity than to-day, when I myself might be called to my account before the morrow came. I have never had reason to repent acting upon this impression. I said to myself when I came to your father’s house: ‘I am come hither as a minister of Christ, and perhaps as a missionary. I am not come, however, among heathen persons, but to a family of professed Christians. If they are true to their profession, they will rejoice that I should deliver my message to them, and invite them to worship the God of their fathers with me; but if they are merely Christians in name, they are in a more deplorable state than the heathen who have never heard of Christ, to whom the

missionary brings, for the first time, the glad tidings of salvation. And I am under a double obligation before God to endeavor to awaken them to a sense of their duty, and to win them to seek and to love their adorable Redeemer.'"

"Very true, yes, very true," said my sister thoughtfully. "You were right, my dear sir, and I was wrong." But then, with the usual pertinacity of her character, and with her usual quickness, she said abruptly: "but how did you know that my father's household were not accustomed to assemble for family worship?"

He quietly replied: "When we came into the drawing-room after dinner, almost the first question which I put to your good aunt Margaret was on this very subject; and her reply, and the look of astonishment that accompanied it, told me plainly enough that the custom was one wholly unknown at Westhall."

"Strange," said Susan. "My aunt never even alluded to your having spoken to her on the subject."

"Not so very strange," said Colonel Wyndham. "since you have scarcely seen her from that even-

ing until the day I met with my fall; and one may easily suppose that her kind heart has been more occupied with your anxiety than with any other matter."

"I am fairly beaten," said my sister, "and I have now nothing to do, but heartily to agree with you in all that you have said, and indeed I can never sufficiently thank you, not only for your goodness to my husband, but for your tender solicitude for the spiritual welfare of all my family, and, I trust, for myself also. Dear Mr. Wynne," she added afterwards, "I entreat you to add another favor to those we have already received from you. Speak to my uncle Peregrine. His state is truly distressing, and a real grief to my father. He is indeed one of the most careless clergymen I have ever met with, though a kind-hearted creature; and I love him very dearly. He has always been more like a brother than an uncle to me, for there are not many years difference between us. Since we have resided in his parish, we have been able to judge better about his character and conduct as a clergyman; and between ourselves, I do assure you that I am

sometimes quite ashamed of him. Within the last few days I have taken advantage of my sisterly affection for him, and remonstrated most seriously with him on the sad inconsistencies of his conduct, and on his utter neglect of his parish. But he only laughs, and tells me he never did like his profession, and never shall; that he was forced into the Church against his will, and that he would quit it to-morrow if he could do so—that is, if he could afford to give up a comfortable income.”

“I can only answer your question,” replied Mr. Wynne, “by saying, that on such a point as this which you now bring before me, I feel that if I would succeed, I must endeavor to exercise the most judicious discretion. But I thank you for the confidence that you have placed in me, and I will lose no opportunity of seeking to win your uncle to love the calling to which he has pledged himself, however unwillingly it may have been.”

“It is a glorious calling,” said Colonel Wyndham: “happy are those who have learnt to love it. Surely no office is so high and honorable on earth as that of a minister of Christ; and I, on

my part, am beginning to feel that there is no service so delightful as that of His disciple."

"To learn the Angels' Song," said Mr. Wynne, "not only from the joyful chorus which the shepherds of Bethlehem heard when Christ the Lord was born into this world, but from the whole record of His life and ministry among men,—this is, I am convinced, the great lesson of life, and he is the happiest man, whatever his calling on earth may be, who is the most diligent learner. He has entered that path of light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

CHAPTER VII.

Sorrowful, yet still rejoicing ;
Poor, and yet possessing all ;
Blest, although the world, deriding,
Madness my religion call.

Thus am I, since Thou hast sought me,
Gracious Lord ! and made me Thine ;
Raised me, comforted, and brought me
To Thy feet, and Thou art mine—*MS.*

I WAS sitting one morning with Mr. Wynne in the cedar parlor, which we had made over to his especial use, and which we called his retreat. My father entered, and I was about to leave the room, for he said : "I am come, my good sir, to have a little private conversation with you. Don't go, Horace, my dear boy," he added ; "for what I have to say concerns you, as my son and successor in this household, as well as myself."

He sat in silence for some minutes ; his eyes were fixed upon the portrait of his father, which hung upon the opposite wall. It was a thought-

ful silence; and the sight of that portrait had deepened its thoughtfulness, though what was passing in his mind I knew not.

"I have heard you say," he said abruptly, addressing himself to Mr. Wynne, "that religion is happiness."

"I have said so, and shall always say so," replied Mr. Wynne.

"I can't understand it," said my father. "I am beginning to find out, for the first time in my long life, what true religion is, and I am not happy. I thought that I was happy before you came among us, but that happiness now appears to me as fleeting as a dream."

"Rather say as unsubstantial," replied Mr. Wynne.

"At any rate," said my father, "the dream is ended. I am awake, and I am unhappy; and yet, I am beginning to think seriously about religion,—about my own soul, and the soul of my household,—my children, my brothers, and sister,—my servants, my tenants. I do not say that religion is not duty,—I know and feel that it is,—but I cannot see that it is happiness."

"Happiness," said Mr. Wynne gravely, "is a serious thing—a thoughtful joy."

My father was again silent. He was again deep in thought. I stole a glance at his countenance; its expression was new to me. It was always that of an honest, benevolent heart; now it was also that of an earnest and reflective spirit. A deep sigh rose from his heaving chest.

"I begin to see," he said at length, "that old as I am, I have led a careless, useless life. I do not mean that I have been careless about this world; for I have been careful, and troubled (like her of old, of whom you spoke to us this morning) about many things; but the *one* thing that is needful has been overlooked and forgotten. I see it now rising before me in its grandeur, and in its unspeakable importance, and I am unhappy—most unhappy. Religion cannot be happiness to me, for I shall go mourning all my days. In fact, I am confounded, abashed. I feel myself degraded, and sunk in my own eyes. The past years of my life have been lost years; seasons lost and gone by, never to be regained; and I am now an old man: perhaps I have not another year to live. I

feel that the infirmities of age are increasing upon me, and that my strength is failing me. Now, indeed, that my mind is thus troubled, and my heart heavy, old age seems to tell upon me as it has never done before. Sir, I find that I am not prepared to die. What am I to do?"

His eyes were fixed earnestly on Mr. Wynne, who sat grave and thoughtful, and did not immediately reply. He turned his eyes again on his father's portrait, and then looked me in the face. "There is my son, too," he continued—"my eldest son—he is an altered being. He was never very cheerful; often occupied with his books, and not caring much, like the rest of his family, for field sports; but he is now more of a recluse, and more reserved and silent than ever."

"My dear father," I exclaimed, and with so lively and cheerful a voice that he started, "you have quite misunderstood me. I trust I am beginning to be an altered being, but I am not unhappy; nay, on the contrary, I am beginning to learn what happiness really is. I used to be listless and absent in mind; occupied with the mere idleness of study; reading, as I lived, without aim;

wasting and wearing away the precious hours of my life in a dreary, useless existence. But now, I thank God from my heart, I am beginning to live in earnest, and to some purpose. I fear, however, that what you have remarked about me is too true ; that is, that I have seemed to you more thoughtful and more reserved than ever. I have been so in society ; yes, even in our own family circle ; but Mr. Wynne will tell you I am not so when alone with him ; and I have passed many hours of every day in his company, reading, or walking, or conversing with him. I know you would wish me to attend upon him, as you are so often obliged to be otherwise occupied,—in a word, to take your place in your absence.”

“ You are quite right, my dear Horace,” he replied ; “ you cannot be too much in Mr. Wynne’s company ; you must be the gainer in all your intercourse with him.”

“ I may tell you, dear sir,” said I, “ after hearing what you have just said—what I am afraid I should have been not long ago ashamed to own, even to you,—that I have for a time laid aside all other books, and that I am reading the

Bible for some hours every day with this valued friend. Ashamed, did I say! To what a state must we have been brought, even to have entertained a passing thought of being ashamed of the Bible! That the great God of heaven and earth should have given a record of such inestimable value—the expression of His own infinite and eternal mind—the revelation of as much of His glorious character as man in his present state is capable of comprehending—the message of His surpassing love to creatures already lost and under condemnation—and that any one of those creatures should be found so utterly blind to his own best interest, so thoroughly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, that he should willingly consent to let that priceless volume lie neglected and unopened! Yet, such has been the case with myself.”

“And how far more sinful,” said my father, the tears filling his eyes, “how far more sinful, has been my disregard of that sacred book! Sir, you have told us truly,” he said to Mr. Wynne; “we are all gone out of the way; there is none that understandeth, that seeketh after God. And yet he has given His own Son to die for us.”

"And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," added Mr. Wynne.

There was a short pause; and then, with a clear and excellent voice, the excellent man addressed my father:

"I shall surprise you, sir," he said, "perhaps distress you, when I reply, in answer to the question which you came to ask me, that every word that you have spoken as to your unhappiness has filled my heart with joy. You have said, that you are beginning to experience what true religion is, and that you have become unhappy, that indeed you find it impossible to understand how happiness and religion can exist together. There is a state of mind which I cannot better describe, than by calling it a transition state; when, though the outer man with all its senses and faculties knows no change, the inner man enters into a new and unknown world. Old things are passing away: but while they are passing, though the judgment is convinced, and the preference is given, the fearful and trembling spirit hardly dares to appropriate a joy of which it feels itself wholly undeserving. And again, and yet again it needs to be assured,

that, like the gift of its new life, its new happiness is also of free grace. Nevertheless, it is written: 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.' This is the will and the command of God; and I cannot entertain a doubt, that at no distant time you will be enabled to experience not only the assurance but the joy of salvation, through Jesus Christ." Let not your inquiry be, however, 'am I happy?' but, 'do I love Christ?' Or, I should rather say, do not ask, 'why am I not happy?' but 'why do I not love Christ more?' And let your chief concern be, to learn more and more of His love for you, that you *may* love Him more and more. The weaning time is always a season of disturbance, even to an infant's mind; and the soul is even as a weaned child when it is first taken away from the things of this world, in which it once found its sole gratification. There is One who can alone make these things plain and delightful to you,—the Holy Spirit. Pray, my dear friend, for His teaching."

We were interrupted by Toogood: "If you please, sir," he said to my father, "to come into the drawing-room, for Master Frederic is come

with two officers ; and if you please, sir, to let me go and call a groom, for Richard has a hard matter to hold the three young gentlemen's horses, which are rather restive."

My father started up with delight :—" I wished you to see my son Frederic," he said, addressing Mr. Wynne ; " but I did not anticipate this joyful surprise."

" My brother Frederic, in his last letter to me," said I, " spoke of a faint hope which he had of his regiment coming to Chichester ; but begged me to say nothing about it till he wrote again. I knew that the regiment was to leave Norwich in the course of this week ; but Frederic's fears were, that they should be ordered to Ireland."

Aunt Margaret came bustling in while I was speaking, saying that she was sure Toogood could not have told us of the arrival : " and here is Frederic, she said, " and two young men as tall as grenadiers, in full regimentals ; and they are all come to dinner."

" Well," said my father, as he hurried off, " I shall be right glad to see them. Only take care to give them a good dinner, for young men are often

as hungry as hunters. A haunch of venison ?—yes, if you like ; but it will be rather tough, for the last buck has not been shot a week. Lord William Turner !—well, my dear Margaret, I shall make no difference for him. There, there : go to Peters, and lay your heads together ; only don't detain me any longer. Why, was ever such a woman ? you came to hurry me off, and now you won't let me go. No, no, I say ; no more plate than on common occasions. One would think that the Judges were coming to dine with us, instead of three boy-officers."

It was a joyful meeting, for my brother had been absent nearly a year, and had not been at home since his first joining his regiment ; but not many minutes had passed when we saw that dear Frederic was no longer the same frank, open-hearted youth that had left us. He had become a fine gentleman, and looked and talked like a stranger in his own father's house. When a boy at Eton, he had been always one of the first to laugh at tuft-hunting ; but the extraordinary attentions that he lavished on his titled friend, and the intimacy that he affected with him, showed that he

had forgotten the honest independence of his school-boy days. As for Lord William, the outer man was uncommonly good looking, and extremely well dressed ; but the style of his conversation was as unmeaning and as deficient in sense as the features of his handsome face. The other young officer was a Mr. Beardmore, a self-complacent youth, who talked very fast, and seemed to have but one idea always uppermost—that his large fortune gave him much importance, and that his own horses and dogs, of which we heard much in the course of that visit, were, like every thing else he possessed, super-excellent. I am afraid these opinions may be deemed rather uncharitable ; but I remember they were the opinions I then formed ; for I was really indignant to find what associates my brother, who was a lad of sense and right feeling, had chosen. His companions, however, I must allow, were idle, profligate young men. Uncle Oliver said to Frederic, though not in their hearing : “ Well, Fred, if your new friends will do you no harm, at least they do not seem likely to do you much good. At any rate, they will neither of them set the Thames on fire.”

I quite agreed with my uncle Oliver's remark, for it was evident enough that either they or others had already done harm to Frederic.

Frederic was at that time scarcely nineteen, and had been from his childhood the favorite of the whole household. He was my only brother, and especially dear to me. I think if he loved any one on earth more than another, it was myself; and he was not long in my company before his old affectionate manner returned; and every now and then, though he was almost absorbed in his attentions to his new friends, he would leave them and put his arm within mine, pressing it to his side as he did so, and whispering what joy it gave him to be with me again. He thanked me again and again for keeping with them, which I did during the whole of the day, little thinking that my chief reason for doing so,—putting out of the question my affection for him,—was, that I might observe as closely as I could the characters of his companions, and what influence they possessed over him. But I could make very little out of them: there was little of distinctive character in either; and the only conclusion I could come to

was, that they were vain, empty, commonplace lads, with nothing to boast of, but high birth in the one case, and great wealth in the other. As we passed through the flower-garden on our way to the stables, (the first place of course to be visited,) we met Mr. Wynne leaning on his son's arm. Frederic quitted Lord William, with whom he was walking, and seized my arm, saying: "Who have we here?"

I told him, and said I must take him to Mr. Wynne and introduce him. With a slight shrug of his shoulders, and with his new and artificial manner, he said: "Spare me at present, if you please;" but his better feelings returned, and he added: "I suppose it would be ill-bred to pass him: he is a relation, I believe."

"It would indeed be ill-bred, my dear Frederic," I replied. But the cold and almost haughty manner with which he received the cordial greeting of Mr. Wynne,—the son he hardly noticed,—made me regret that I had proposed the introduction.

"Only poor relations," I heard Frederic say afterwards to his companions; and some remark

was made by one of them which I did not hear ; but it seemed to amuse them all, for it was followed by a loud laugh. The stables were visited ; and I was sorry to perceive that poor Frederic showed more interest about the horses than he did in the excellent man whom he had just met for the first time, and who was also his relation ; and that he could talk familiarly with the forward fellow who was at that time my father's head-groom. Great admiration was expressed by Lord William about a young horse which had been reared on the estate, and which my father had talked of giving to Frederic. It seemed to acquire a value in my brother's eyes which it certainly had not possessed before, for he had often said that he liked neither the color nor the make of the horse. I heard his voice soon after loud in angry indignation, and came back to the stable, which I had quitted a few minutes before.

"What is the matter, my dear Frederic ?" I said, after listening for a short time, and hearing sundry epithets of virulence from his lips, such as "insolence !—presumption !—unwarrantable liberty !" "Harry tells me," he replied, "that

that young Welsh puppy has been riding my horse. Harry says, that the wonder is the animal is not spoilt. He is too young to be ridden at present."

"It was by my orders," I said, "that Hugh Wynne rode Antelope. My father told me, that as you did not admire the horse, he should give you the money when you next came home to buy one that would please you better. However, the horse is mine; for reckoning upon your not wishing for it, I begged my father to let me give him my old Grey, which he had taken a fancy to on account of its gentleness, in exchange for Antelope, otherwise Antelope would have been sold six months ago. As for Harry's opinion, he might have told you that it was overruled by that of Dennis the coachman, who knew more about a horse before he was born than he does at this present time. My cousin Hugh is a light weight, and a capital horseman, and has done no hurt to Antelope; on the contrary, he has done much to break him in: his docility under his hand has been the admiration of every one of us."

"Well, I like the horse," said Frederic. "I

never saw a horse so improved. You admire him as much as I do, Lord William?"

"Don't I, Fred!" he answered. "Had I been you I should have kept him."

"Will you sell him, Horace?" said my brother, turning abruptly to me.

"Certainly not," I replied, smiling, "to a young soldier, who has, I suspect, no money to spare; but I will give him to you with great pleasure; and to say the truth, one of my reasons for buying him was that I might do so, if I saw that you had changed your mind about him."

My brother was warm in his thanks, and said he should certainly ride Antelope back to Chichester that evening. "I should like to show him to the duke," he added with an affected carelessness, "when we ride over to Goodwood to-morrow."

I was much distressed on my return to the house to hear from aunt Margaret that Mr. Wynne had been attacked by a sudden faintness while taking his usual walk, and that she had sent for the doctor, who had given him a restoring draught, and had recommended his lying down, and remaining quietly in his own apartment during the

rest of the day. I went to him immediately, and was pleased to find him much revived; so much so, that he proposed coming down to dinner. But I joined with his children in urging him not to do so, especially as strangers would be added to our party.

When we assembled for dinner, I found that Pamela was also absent.

"She will join us in the drawing-room after dinner," said aunt Margaret, in answer to an inquiry from my father, "when her father goes to bed."

I was not sorry that Mr. Wynne was absent from the dining-room. He had never seen the kind of party at Westhall that was assembled there that day; though before he came to us such parties were not unusual. My uncle Peregrine, and one of our neighbors who had ridden over with him, remained to dinner; and the latter, who was one of my uncle's friends, did not improve the tone of the conversation during dinner. My father looked very grave, and did not hesitate to give one or two reproofs, though with much kindness of manner; and I felt exceedingly annoyed,

and spoke to no one but to Hugh Wynne, who sat next me. Frederic called for champagne ; and before the cloth was removed, it was too evident that he and his companions had drank so many glasses of that and other wine, that they became very talkative. Such was but too common in those days. Aunt Margaret, who was the only lady present, seemed glad to escape, and left the table sooner than she usually did. I became more annoyed, and my annoyance increased to indignation when I heard the untitled young officer say in a loud whisper to Frederic : " Let us make the milkop drunk." This young man began to show more of his real character under the influence of the wine he had drank. He was under-bred and purse-proud ; and his conversation, after my aunt's departure, was not commonly decent. The three young men—Frederic, I am sorry to say, being one of them—seemed to think it an excellent joke to make a dead set at Hugh. They challenged him to drink, and put several questions to him, which caused the color to mount even to his temples, till my father began to get angry, and told them in plain terms that he would

allow no such liberties to be taken with any guest at his table; on which Lord William, with a cool impertinence that astonished me, assumed an air of gravity, and asked him to take a glass of wine with him. I was still more disgusted, I grieve to say, by my uncle Peregrine's want of discretion, to call it no worse; for though he had not taken too much wine, he seemed to enjoy the whole scene, and gave way occasionally to bursts of loud laughter. I could not help admiring the manliness and the sweet temper of my young cousin Hugh Wynne, and the air of quiet self-possession with which he addressed my father, when after sitting some time exposed to the impertinence of the other young men, and calmly, but decidedly, refusing to drink, letting them see that he was neither to be abashed nor provoked by their ungentlemanly behavior,—he said :

“If you will allow me, sir, I will go up to my father. I always attend him when he retires to rest.”

“Go by all means, my dear boy,” said my father; “I only wonder you have had patience to sit here so long. That young man,” he continued

as the door closed upon Hugh, "has proved himself a real gentleman ; and some of you, my young friends, who, I have no doubt, from the way in which you have conducted yourselves, look down upon him as an unpolished rustic, may learn a lesson of good breeding and manly principle from him. I am only sorry that such a lesson should be needed. But you will understand from me, my dear Frederic, there must be no more of this behavior. Come, we have had enough wine ; we will join the ladies. Frederic, you are the youngest present, ring the bell."

In the drawing-room we found aunt Margaret, and Pamela seated near her, both busily engaged, one with her knitting, and the other over her embroidery frame. The young officers had been somewhat abashed by my father's grave rebuke and decided manner. Frederic was silent, and evidently unable to recover himself. Mr. Beardmore looked sulky, and the young nobleman sheepish. The two latter remained conversing together for some time in the embrasure of one of the further windows, and did not join the rest of the party. Frederic had thrown himself into a

chair, and remained there till Lord William came and drew a chair near him, and soon after the other did the same, and they entered into some deep discussion, which I learnt afterwards was on the mode of their returning to Chichester that evening. It was now dark, and I recommended their waiting till the moon was up, before they ordered their horses, or else remaining all night ; and I succeeded, after some persuasion, in carrying the latter point. Though not exactly intoxicated, I felt that it would not be without risk that they mounted their horses to return to their barracks ; and my father seemed much relieved when he heard that the foolish lads would be safely housed for the night. I was still conversing with my brother, when an exclamation from one of his companions arrested my attention,—a most audible expression of admiration ; and turning my head, I saw the vulgar Mr. Beardmore staring with open eyes on my gentle cousin Pamela, who sat the picture of modest elegance, listening to some observations of my father's, having for awhile laid aside her embroidery-needle when he had taken his seat beside her. Neither of the young officers,

it appeared, had noticed her when they entered the room; but they now seemed so charmed by the discovery they had made, that they rose up simultaneously, as if attracted to the other side of the room. Frederic stopping to ask me who she was, and his companions, who heard his question, waiting for my reply.

"Only another poor relation," I answered with some emphasis; "but one, remember, young gentlemen, whose sex and modesty demand somewhat more courtesy than you have chosen to exhibit towards her brother."

"She is a lovely creature," said Frederic; and though these men cannot ask for an introduction, I have a right to do so, on the score of relationship. Come, Horace," he added, passing his arm within mine, "take me to this fair cousin, and introduce me immediately."

I hesitated, but was about to comply, when he disengaged himself from me, and the moment after, I saw him standing before Pamela.

"My father has introduced me," he said, as I came up to him; and seeing that I was about to occupy the only vacant chair near her, he sprang

before me, and seated himself in it, looking round at his friends, and laughing aloud. All this was new to Pamela ; she fixed her eyes upon him for a moment with a look of quiet astonishment, and then with a gentle self-possession—it was part of her character—she turned towards my father and continued conversing with him, as calmly as if she had not noticed the boyish rudeness of poor Frederic.

“Here, Horace,” he said, after a little time, “take your place, I was only joking ; but you really did seem so anxious to take possession of this chair, that I was determined to outwit you,”—and rising as he spoke, he whispered loud enough for every one to hear : “she is a lovely creature, and I give you great credit for your taste.”

I was now more annoyed than before, and for a moment felt angry ; but a glance at Pamela’s countenance taught me the best way of treating the foolish but good natured boy. A slight flush had tinted her delicate cheek, but passed away as quickly as it came, and no other emotion could

have led the closest observer to suspect that she had heard the words of my unmannerly brother.

Aunt Margaret, who was sitting near us, now rose, and coming to Pamela, asked her to sing.

"Ah do, my dear child," said my father; "you are now almost as good a performer on the harpsichord as on your favorite organ; and I shall feel much disappointed if I lose my evening song."

Pamela smiled, and expressed at once her readiness to sing to him; and Frederic hastened to open the harpsichord. I observed the eyes of Lord William and his companions fixed upon her hands as she took off her gloves and laid them upon the instrument; and the three young men crowded round her. Aunt Margaret came forward, and said with a good-humored smile:

"Be so good, my dear Frederic, to move a little aside; I must turn over the leaves of Pamela's music-book;" and she drew in her chair, and caused the young men to fall back a little.

Pamela's cheek was again flushed, and the soft color did not pass away as before. She became still graver; but her countenance wore its usual calm, sweet expression, when she looked round to

my father, and asked him what he wished her to sing.

“ My favorite song, dear child,” he replied,—
“ ‘ The Bird of Passage.’ ”

Bird of Passage, gladly rising
On thy free and buoyant wings;
All beneath thee lightly prizing,
Gardens, woods, and gushing springs.

Swiftly on thy passage speeding,
Fearing nought, and braving all;
Past delights no longer heeding,
True to thy mysterious call.

Nothing from thy course can turn thee,
Check thy progress, stop thee, more,
Till thine out-spread wings have borne thee
To some far-off, sunny shore.

Ah, my soul! while earthly pleasures
Here below thy solace make,
Low ambitions, worthless treasures,
From that bird thy lesson take.

Listen to thy glorious message,—
Turn from things of sense and time,—
And be like that Bird of Passage
Soaring to a happier clime.

At the first sound of her wonderfully beautiful

voice, and till the charming song was ended, a deep stillness prevailed throughout the room. Then the young officers pressed forward again, in spite of aunt Margaret, and overwhelmed the gentle girl with their delight and admiration in extravagant compliments.

"You will sing again," said Frederic. "I never heard anything so fine in my life."

"You don't mean to tantalize us so cruelly, I trust," said Lord William, "by letting us hear only that one song."

"Thank you," replied Pamela quietly, and she rose up; "it is really too late to-night. We are summoned to prayers."

"To what!" said Frederic; and then he stood staring with astonishment after Toogood, who had thrown open the folding doors, and after announcing that it was ten o'clock (our time for evening prayers) had retreated into the ante-room.

"What new-fangled notion is this?" said Frederic in a loud whisper, turning to uncle Peregrine. "Are you the chaplain?"

"I trust so for to-night," said my father, who

had heard my brother's words : "our usual chaplain is not with us."

"Oh no, not me," said my uncle ; "the head of the household is the proper person, or his eldest son," looking to me and bowing, with a slightly supercilious smile.

My father turned to me without noticing him, and said : "Horace, you will be our chaplain to-night. You had better remain where you are, young gentlemen," he added, addressing Frederic and his companions, "or perhaps you would like to go to bed. Frederic, you can show these young gentlemen their rooms ; they are the two chambers adjoining your own."

When we returned to the drawing-room, they had left it. "And this is what we have been long accustomed to call pleasure," I said to myself, as I sat alone in my quiet chamber that night, my head filled with anxiety about that only and much-loved brother. "This is already the effect of intercourse with the world ! How short a time it takes to change an ingenuous, manly boy, into an affected fop. How soon he has learnt to sneer with the scorners and to drink with the drunken. But is

my once warm-hearted Frederic thus changed? Has he lost that kindness of heart which appeared, —nay, which was, I am sure, so genuine,—that frank and natural manner? I cannot believe it, and I will not judge him; and yet, how is it that I grieve over him? A little time ago, his follies and his sin (for sin it is) would have afforded me but matter for amusement. I should have said, all this is inevitable. My brother is only like other young men of his age; this affectation is absurd; this intemperance makes him talk nonsense; but the evil will cure itself. As he grows older, he will get wiser; in the meantime my father will have some heavy bills to pay for him, and his own constitution will suffer, I fear, from the natural consequences of a dissipated course; but when he has sown his wild oats, he will settle down, as others have done before him, into a steady and respectable member of society." But the time was past when I could have satisfied myself with such reasoning. I could only feel, "this poor dear boy is my own and only brother: he has set out on the Prodigal's journey. If he has not already reached the far country, he is on the borders of it. I shall

surely be more cold-hearted than the elder brother in the parable if I do not seek to bring him back : but is he likely to consent to come back ? Will he not be brought to the famine and the husks before he comes to himself, and desires, and resolves to return ? If it should not be till then, even then I would welcome him as even the Father welcomed the return of his penitent child. I am sure I could not act the elder brother's part to him at any time. But will he ever return if we make no exertion to win him back ? Many set out on the Prodigal's journey, but very few ever come back." I opened my Bible, and sought the place where it is written of Andrew : " He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." I had before thought of my Frederic in connexion with this passage of Holy Scripture ; but now I pondered over the words till my tears dropped fast over the sacred page : my heart was full of what I had read. " There is one way,—the first, and perhaps after all the best way,"—I said to myself, " by which I may bring my brother to Jesus, and that

is by prayer ;” and I thought of some remarks which my dear friend Mr. Wynne had made to me but a day or two before : “ If ye shall ask anything in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

The prayer I offered was not only, I trust, the prayer of my head, but of a humble unquestioning faith in that divine promise. A sweet and refreshing spirit of hope stole into my heart as I rose up from my knees. The next morning at an early hour I was at my brother's bedside. He was still asleep ; and I stood and gazed upon his beloved countenance as he lay there in a disturbed slumber. His cheek was pale, and his eyelids heavy, and his fine dark hair disordered ; and every now and then he raised his hand, which lay on the coverlid, with the restless movement of one ill of a fever. He muttered some almost inaudible words more than once with his pale parched lips, and as he did so, his brow contracted with a frown. He said something of “ not caring,” and I distinguished my own name ; but then he smiled, and fell into a more sound and quiet slumber.

A pang shot through my heart as I looked

down upon my sleeping brother. He had been a delicate child from his birth, and we had felt much anxiety about his health, till he began to grow out of his boyhood, and his constitution to become settled, as we had hoped, into new strength. "But he will never be able," I said to myself, "to bear up against a life of intemperance and dissipation. His former ailments will soon return, and he will sink into an early grave. As for his state this morning, it cannot be entirely the effect of the wine which he drank yesterday,—my father's good wine too! That wine would not have caused all this disorder of the system,—no, the scene of last evening is, I fear, one of frequent, if not daily, occurrence." I placed my hand in his; it was dry and feverish. He started at the touch, and awoke.

"Ha, Horace, is it you?" he said: "I was dreaming about you."

He held out his hand to me, and grasped mine with hearty affection.

"You are hot and feverish, my Frederic," I said.

"Am I?" he replied, raising my hand and

pressing it to his forehead ; “ feel here. I have a tremendous head-ache. How cool and pleasant your dear old hand feels ! Keep it there ; it does me good to feel it, and to see your face with your old affectionate look. You were always the kindest brother to me. I was dreaming that I had done something to displease you ; and that you had chidden me severely ; and that I had been giving way to one of my old boyish fits of passion ; and that then you looked grave, as you used to do when I was a child ; and that I came to you, and begged you to forgive me, and hung about your neck, and coaxed you, as in old times, and told you how very sorry I was ; and that then you smiled upon me ; and now I wake and find you standing by me. You do not smile—you look very sad ; and yet I never saw more affection in your dear face than now. What is the matter ? Is my father ill ? What are you thinking about ? ”

“ Nothing is the matter. My father is quite well. I met him with his hat on as I came to your chamber, setting out for his morning walk. But I am sad, for I have been watching your troubled sleep, and thinking about yourself, my

Frederic. You are not well ; and I can see too plainly the cause : you have begun a life ruinous alike to your bodily health, and to your soul."

Frederic looked grave, and even angry, at my plain-speaking.

"I am not a boy, Horace," he added, and he stopped.

"And you don't like to be lectured," I continued ; "was that what you were going to say ?"

"Yes," he replied, "and I won't stand it,—no, not even from you, Horace ; and I would bear more from you than any other man, except my father."

He looked at me steadfastly for a few moments ; but though he saw that I was very grave, he saw nothing but the deep affection which I felt, in my face, and then his own anger passed away, and with a smile and a very different tone,—a tone of playfulness,—he said :

"No, no, I won't stand it—and yet I will. Say what you like, lecture me as you will, (for I deserve a lecture,) and I shall only love you better. No one ever loved a brother, Horace, as I love you."

My heart began to revive as he spoke thus : I felt that my influence still continued ; that there was still some of the old ground to work upon with him.

"I come not to lecture, but to counsel ; and perhaps entreat," I said : and sitting down beside him on the bed, and clasping his hand in mine : "I want you to give me your confidence, Frederic ; to tell me, as you always did when a child, all that you feel to be wrong in your way of living ; to speak to me without a single reserve as to yourself, nay, to own to me more than you have perhaps yet owned even to yourself ; and I promise you not even to look grave : but no, I cannot say that. I may look grave, but I will not look displeased. I will tell you just what I think ; but you shall feel as I do so ; 'oh, I can bear anything from him, for his heart is full of love for me.' You are not a child now, Frederic, though you will be always as my child to me. You must reason and decide and act for yourself as a man, and we shall speak as man to man ; but, at the same time, as friend to friend. I shall not argue with you, though I may try what the

influence of my affection can do in persuading. You will, however, do as you please, after hearing all that I may say to you. I have made one discovery lately—a great discovery : that while we may and must use all our influence with those we love, a far higher power than that of any man's is needed to turn the mind, and win over the will, to make us do as we please, when we do right."

"What power do you speak of, Horace?"

"The power of God!" I replied.

At that moment the door of the room was thrown open, and Lord William entered. He was dressed. He started when he saw me, and stared as he bowed with a cool and distant manner; then turning from me, as if not even noticing that I was present, he said :

"We were to have been off early this morning; and how is this, Somerville, I find you still in bed? Remember, if you are to call at Goodwood to-day, we have no time to lose."

"I shall be ready in no time," said Frederic; his manner changing with the entrance of his titled friend. "What a bore it is not to be ready for you. But I must beg you both," he added,

"to leave the room, and allow me to get up. Horace, will you be kind enough to ring the bell before you go? A glass of spring water will take away this" (and he used a profane term that I do not repeat) "headache."

"I shall order coffee for you directly," I said, "if you must go before our breakfast hour."

"Do, by all means," replied Frederio; "for we shall not stop for a regular breakfast: and good-bye, if I do not see you again: and, I say, Horace, you can tell my father that I have taken Harry with me. I will send him back before night. I find he talks of leaving, and Lord William wants a groom, and thinks of taking him. We shall want him," he added, turning to his companion, "shall we not?"

"Of course," said the other, with an imperturbable coolness.

As I left the room, my thoughts still occupied with my brother, my heart again sank. "I see how it is," I said to myself. "My poor Frederio, amiable as he is, and well disposed, has no character or strength of mind; he can be led by any one; and what two leaders have now got hold of him.

He is miserably weak ; and his future life will greatly depend upon those whose hands he falls into. He can be led ; but, as I also find, he cannot be driven. Ah, who shall lead him aright ? what hope is there among such a set of companions as he now seems to have, if these two silly coxcombs are specimens ? Who shall lead, and who shall turn him ? What hope can I have !” and then my thoughts recurred to Him who hears and answers prayer. “ He may open a way unseen by us at present ; and He can make the weakest strong ; and in that heart where He plants strength of principle, He plants also the desire, and He gives the will, and the power, to be led by any one but Him.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"If they will cast the mire of false reproaches on you, take no notice, but go on your way; it will dry, and easily rub off"—

LEIGHTON.

I FOUND, on going to the stables before breakfast, that Frederic and his companions had not only taken Harry with them, but Antelope. It seems there had been a plan, which they had arranged with Harry the day before, but of which I had heard nothing, that he should ride Antelope over to Chichester that morning; but when they subsequently met, a new plan was started by Mr. Beardmore. He proposed rather a mad scheme, but one which was attempted, that Harry should ride my brother's horse, and that he should drive his horse and Antelope in a tandem. A gig was needed for this; and Frederic ran up to my uncle Oliver's room, and asked his leave to take his gig, which was seldom moved from the coach-house—a permission which he easily obtained. I heard from

Frederic afterwards, the account of an adventure which nearly led to a frightful accident, and one by which he and Mr. Beardmore were nearly losing their lives ; and probably would have done so, but for the courage and manly self-possession of one whom they had insulted and despised. Antelope had been placed as leader in the tandem, and seemed at first gentle and tractable ; the other horse having been in harness before, they got on very well for a short time ; so that after having proceeded a few hundred yards, both Mr. Beardmore and Frederic congratulated themselves upon the ease with which they were able to manage their horses, and began to relax in the care and caution they had first observed. Their attention was, in fact, partly attracted by the appearance of Hugh Wynne, whom they saw walking by the road-side, in the same direction as that in which they were going. At the sound of their carriage-wheels, he turned his head, and on seeing them, turned aside to walk in another direction. He had not gone many yards, however, before he returned to the road, and putting a book which he had been reading into his pocket, continued to

walk forward by the road-side till they overtook him. As they came up to him, Mr. Beardmore said to my brother :

" I say, Somerville, here is the queer chap who would not drink yesterday. It will be rare fun to roast him. Come, you are the man to begin." Then turning to Lord William, he said : " We're going to roast a green-horn."

I give no more of the slang of that young gentleman. His proposal, and his language, however, were responded to by a loud laugh, in which the groom Harry joined, with his usual familiarity. Frederic was the first to address the young man with a mock gravity : " I am glad to see you are fond of walking." And seeing the eyes of Hugh fixed on Antelope, he added, almost in the same breath : " for I have been compelled to take away your favorite horse—*my* horse."

But here Mr. Beardmore interrupted.

" You, I have no doubt, are equally fond of reading : some good book, I trust. May we know the title ?"

" If you wish it," said Hugh, looking him full in the face : " the best of books, the Bible."

"Well, come, tell us then whether it would not be as well to keep your Bible-reading for your own room?" This was said in a very smooth, soft voice. "I mean no offence; but is it not a little—a very little—like setting oneself up for being better than others, making a kind of display—to be reading your Bible?"

Hugh calmly and earnestly replied: "I do not like display of any kind; but religious display I dislike as much as you can do; therefore when I found I was not alone in my usual morning walk, I put my Bible in my pocket. I do not read it, I trust, to be seen of men, but for my own good."

"Ashamed of the thing, eh?" said Lord William, with a cold, cutting laugh.

"Certainly not," replied Hugh, with a gentle gravity, and a strong manly voice, which for some minutes silenced the flippant and insolent questioner. "Certainly not;" and he took out his Bible, and opening it, walked away, with his eyes fixed upon its pages. But Mr. Beardmore, it seems, was not to be silenced.

"A word with you, my fine fellow, before you walk off in that grand style: just let me ask you

one question,—does your Bible teach you to be insolent to your betters?"

Hugh's face became crimson, and his eyes flashed,—it was but for a moment. He recovered his calm and gentle self-possession, and with a voice clear and distinct, but no longer loud, he said—his fine countenance lightening up with an expression of peculiar sweetness—"I will gladly tell you what this book does teach me,—it is this: 'Be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing.' Do not" he said with a good-tempered smile, "ask me any more questions, unless you wish me to find my answers from this book." He stood looking them full in the face; not, however, with a challenging look, but with one which agreed with his words. "Do you wish to say anything more to me?"

During the last part of his conversation, Mr. Beardmore had reined in the horses, and stood as still as he could manage to keep them; but he now drove off, saying: "The fellow is half a fool, I think. Don't you think so, Somerville?"

"I really do not," said Frederic, whose better

feelings had begun to prevail. "I like the fellow; I like his spirit; and I like his good temper. Take my advice, Beardmore; never measure swords with him again, or you will get the worst in the argument, as you have just now done."

He had scarcely finished speaking, when Lord William rode up close to the opposite side of Mr. Beardmore, and said in a provokingly cool, dry manner: "You have sent away your victim as raw a subject as ever, eh, Beardmore? and you have got the roasting yourself."

Mr. Beardmore became angry, and began to vent his wrath by swearing at the horses.

"As for that beast of yours, Somerville," he said, "he is but a tame sort of a brute after all: he has no action—no spirit. I will try, however, if I can't put a little into him;" and with that, swinging his whip with a wide circuit, he gave Antelope so forcible a lash, that the startled animal sprang up into the air, and then dashed forward at his full speed. Mr. Beardmore was an excellent whip—one of the few accomplishments which he possessed—and with great dexterity and coolness he succeeded in pulling up the two horses;

not, however, without much difficulty. He was the better enabled to do this by their having started off at the foot of the steep hill which leads to that part of the park where the road turns off towards the East-lodge.

"Really, Beardmore, you are mad," said Frederic, "to risk your own neck as well as mine by such impatience with a young horse that has never been in harness before."


"Well, I believe I was wrong," said his companion, "and I own the horse was not to blame; but that young scoundrel's insolence, and then your bantering, and William Turner's, put me in a rage.—Softly, my little boy, softly," he added, speaking to Antelope: there now, how steadily and pleasantly he steps; he is as quiet as a lamb. Only keep the reins straight, and yourself cool, and you may manage any horse."

They had now ascended the hill, and come to the place where the road turns off almost at a right angle to the east, in the direction of Chichester. Antelope stepped forward, as Frederic said, at a beautiful pace, and Mr. Beardmore began again to praise himself for his skill in driving, when sud-

denly a stag, which had been reposing under the shade of one of the oaks near which they were passing, started up, and bounded across the road close to the horses. Poor Antelope, notwithstanding Mr. Beardmore's protestations to the contrary, had by no means recovered himself, and now set off at even a swifter pace than before. They had not gone far when the reins broke, and all control was lost.

"Only sit still for a moment," said Beardmore with admirable coolness, "till I can tell William Turner and Harry not to ride after us, as I find they are doing, and then follow my example, if we have time for doing so : crawl over the back of the gig, and hold on steadily as you drop yourself to the ground, otherwise it is all over with both of us. Only be cool, my dear fellow."

There was no time, however, to attempt carrying his proposal into effect ; the terrified horses had dashed off, and had come to another turning, where the road wound round the side of a steep hill. The steep descent, which was thick set with trees, was right in front ; and down this descent, and into the midst of the trees, the horses



plunged. One of the wheels came in contact with the stem of a fir tree, which, though not of large growth, was sufficiently strong to check its rapid motion; but the stem gave way, and the horses were again starting off, when their progress was suddenly arrested by the strong, firm hand of a young man, who had bounded forward with amazing speed when he saw their danger. It was no other than Hugh Wynne, who, after having quitted them, had crossed the park by a footpath, which brought him to the foot of the hill by a short cut, scarcely a quarter the distance of the circuitous road. His strength and calmness astonished them all, and he succeeded in stopping the horses,—how, I could never make out,—till Harry, who had left his horse with Lord William, and who certainly at that time was not wanting in readiness and self-possession, came to their assistance. Mr. Beardmore, however, had been dragged out of the gig by one of the projecting branches of a neighboring tree, which had caught in his coat; and he hung dangling about a foot or two from the ground, unable to extricate himself, and cutting a very pitiable figure. He was not injured, how-

ever. No one received any hurt with the exception of Hugh Wynne, whose right wrist was terribly strained, and whose forehead was struck by falling on a sharp stone, just as Harry had managed to cut the traces, and to set the terrified horses at liberty. But he rose up immediately, and finding that Frederic was already safe, his first act was to hasten to the assistance of Mr. Beardmore.

Hugh Wynne had not made his appearance when we met at prayers, and breakfast was over before we heard what had become of him. Mr. Wynne was still confined to his room ; and I begged Pamela to say nothing to her father of his son's absence till I had made some inquiry after him. I went out into the park, and there I met him ; and at a short distance behind him, Harry leading Antelope, who had received some severe injuries, but none from which he was not likely to recover. Hugh was pale, but calm and cheerful : his heart seemed filled with thankfulness for the marvellous escape of the party. He said little of his own part in the adventure. A handkerchief was bound round his head, and the cut in his forehead was

bleeding profusely ; but he made light of his own hurt, though he soon after begged to take my arm : if he had not done so, he would have fallen to the ground from a sudden faintness. We were not long in reaching the house, when I sent off for the doctor, and in the meantime brought aunt Margaret to his assistance, who was skilled in healing cuts and bruises, and who gave him a cordial, and washed his forehead, and put on a plaster, and bound up his wrist, which was much swelled, and very painful. I went up to his father as soon as I saw he had been well attended to and was able to give him a true report.

The next day I received a letter from Frederic. He had been obliged to go on to Chichester after the accident, and was unable to come over to West-hall again for a few days, being detained by duty. His letter told us that Hugh Wynne had saved his life ; and it was filled with praises of his deliverer, as he called him, and of high admiration of the noble and courageous youth. I was sitting with Mr. Wynne when the letter was brought to me, and he said ; “ My dear boy has, at least, learnt

one part of the Angel's Song—"Goodwill towards men."

A fortnight passed away before Frederic came to us. He came alone; and in answer to some question of aunt Margaret's about the two young men he had before brought with him, he said that a coolness had arisen between them and him, and that they were civil to one another, but no more. He had another friend, one who had lately joined the regiment; just the fellow to please you and Mr. Wynne, Horace," he added: "they call him a Methodist, but he is the finest fellow I ever saw. Father," he said, turning suddenly round, "I want you and aunt Margaret to go and call upon Lady Fraser as soon as you can."

"But who is Lady Fraser?" said aunt Margaret, "and where does she live? Is she the wife of your new friend?"

"Wife! aunt Margaret," he exclaimed laughing; "why he is my age, only a month or two older; and what would he do with a wife! No, Lady Fraser is his mother,—poor enough, I believe though a real gentlewoman. She has taken a small house in the outskirts of the city, and on

our side of Chichester, and Fraser has got leave to live out of barracks with his mother and sister. His father knew you, father, and aunt Margaret, a long while ago ; and Lady Fraser told me that he used to speak of you in high terms, as one of the friends of his younger days, whom he most valued."

"Where did he reside?" said my father.

"O, at the family place somewhere down in Scotland,—Rostyre, or some such name."

"It must be my old friend Colin Fraser," said my father. "I knew him intimately ; and I now remember hearing that he had succeeded to his elder brother in the title and the place. Colin Fraser was in the Forty-second. His brother, I believe, had outrun his fortune, and the place was to be put out to nurse."

"Yes," replied Frederic ; "Lady Fraser has never been able to reside there. But the estate is coming round ; and in ten years they hope the property will be free."

"Margaret," said my father, "take care to order the carriage early to-morrow morning, and you and I and Horace will drive over, and call

upon my old friend's widow. I am glad you have made such friends, Frederic; for if Colin Fraser's wife is only half as good as himself, she must be one of the best of women."

"I like her amazingly," said Frederic, "though she is as religious, I suspect, as Mr. Wynne; and her daughter is a charming girl."

"We must have them here," said my father, "and your friend Fraser with them, to pass the Christmas. I would leave no attention unpaid to Colin Fraser's widow,—the more so now she is poor."

CHAPTER IX.

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will towards men."

CHRISTMAS came, and with it the Frasers. If we had been pleased with them during a short morning call, we found that a more intimate acquaintance only confirmed the favorable impression we had received. Such characters as those of Lady Fraser and Mr. Wynne are rare at all times; but were scarcely ever met with in those days. I do not mean that many persons are not to be found who are sincerely religious; but a narrow mind, a sectarian spirit, some personal peculiarity, are too often found in religious characters, which the world have a right to complain of in many whose really excellent qualities it is impossible for the world to appreciate. The light of a holy and a renewed life, even in the loveliest disciples of Christ, is always a treasure in an earthen vessel; and in no instance but in one was

that earthen vessel faultless. Where the standard is high, all men naturally look for a corresponding practice, and every inconsistency is scrutinized and condemned. And those whose standard is low, and whose practice is more consistent, very naturally, but very wrongly, pride themselves upon their superiority to the high and inconsistent professor. In doing this, they condemn themselves, and the world to which they belong; for it is surely a reproach and a disgrace to any one who bears the name of a Christian,—the only meaning of which is, a follower of Christ,—to take credit to himself for setting aside that high standard, those holy doctrines, those godly principles, and that separation from the world, which his Divine Master expressly teaches. There can be but one opinion as to the vileness of a hypocrite's character; but there is an outrageous audacity, however lightly many persons may regard the offence, an insult offered in the very face of heaven, by those who profess to be "willingly ignorant" of what that profession involves, who say to themselves with much complacency, "I thank God I am no hypocrite; no one can

accuse me of too much religion." Oh, how common is this class of persons! How many there are who virtually set aside the Bible, and deny the Lord that bought them! What a convincing proof is this, that it is now as it was at the birth of our Divine Redeemer. A multitude of the angels of heaven sang their glad sweet songs in celebration of that glorious event; but few, alas! how few, were then found, or have ever since been found, to welcome His advent into this wretched world. Well has the prophet said, not "*He was*," but "*He is*, despised and rejected of men."

It was not so, for the first time, that Christmas at my father's house. A new spirit pervaded the household. It seemed to me as if we were preparing to celebrate the birth of our blessed Lord for the first time. There was no looking forward to the revellings, and I might say, riotings, of former years; for my father, like the open-hearted old knight in Westmoreland, of whom Mr. Wynne has spoken in the account which he gave me of his early days in the ministry, had held much the same notions as to the proper

way of keeping Christmas; and had made the sacred holy-day a mere season of unthinking merry-making and excessive festivity. If a company of sun-worshippers were celebrating the rise of their idol deity with their eyes shut, and the question were asked them, "What mean ye by this service?" and if their reply had been, "It is thus we rejoice in his light," we should deem their festival an unmeaning service. And what are Christians about, but holding as unmeaning a festival, who celebrate a Christmas without Christ? Surely, if there is one occasion more than another on which we should say to our fellow-Christians: "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." It is the Christmas season. That season may well be the happiest, gayest season of the year, a holiday when the various and scattered members of a loving family come from far and near to meet together; and well may a large-hearted hospitality be exercised towards rich and poor at a time of the year when the days are cold and dark and

cheerless without, and when warmth and light and cheerful company are doubly pleasant within doors; but though the especial plea for such enjoyment is the coming of Christ, and the season takes its name from Him, He, Himself, is too often on such occasions as an excluded guest; and were His blessed name to be brought prominently forward, at the very festival which is held to honor him, the mention of that name would come like a cloud to darken the brightness of their joy. Yet this is too commonly the Christmas which Christians keep. Godliness is associated with gloom: therefore the ungodly world provides the feast, and assembles the guests; and that sacred name, which is above every name, is brought forward as the plea, and attached as the title of a festival, which has nothing of Christ about it but His name, and in which He has no part but as in mockery. "The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts," saith the Lord of Hosts; "but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands."¹

¹ Isaiah, v. 12.

The constant endeavor of the great enemy of man, is to persuade his dupes that enjoyment is to be found apart from God; and that the mirth of sinners, and of those who forget God, is really productive of happiness.

The wise man's testimony—and he spoke from his own dear-bought and sad experience—is very different: "I said in my heart, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure;" and he adds: "whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them—I withheld not my heart from joy;" but his conclusion is: "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

A large party were assembled to spend the Christmas at Westhall. The Frasers came almost a week before Christmas day, and Frederic came with them. The Wyndhams were also with us. My uncle Peregrine joined our dinner party on the day itself, and remained during the rest of the week; and if he did not share our enjoyment, he had at least the opportunity of seeing that those around him had discovered the secret of true happiness. My dear father had now acquired

sufficient experience of the nature of true religion, to feel that he had been mistaken in saying that it afforded him no happiness. He was beginning to taste the refreshment of those crystal springs which flow forth from him who said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He had drunk of that "living water," and it was "in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Mr. Wynne and I were standing together before the wide fire-place in the hall, enjoying the warmth of the huge logs, which were half consumed by the glowing fire, when my father joined us. Our evening worship was just over, and the rest of the party had returned to the drawing-room. It was Christmas Eve, and we were conversing together on the great event of that joyful season. My father had been struck with the hymn which had been sung at the commencement of our family devotions. It was one that had not long been published, and had been introduced to our notice by Lady Fraser.

"Now let us join with hearts and tongues,
And emulate the angels' songs ;

Yea, sinners may address their King,
In songs that angels cannot sing.

They praise the Lamb, who once was slain,
But we can add a higher strain :
Not only say, He suffered thus,
But that He suffered all for us !

Our next of kin, our brother now,
Is He to whom the angels bow ;
They join with us to praise His name,
But we the nearest interest claim.

Yet ah, how faint our praises rise !
Sure 'tis the wonder of the skies,
That we who share His richest love,
So cold and unconcerned should prove.

Oh, glorious hour, it comes with speed !
When we, from sin and darkness freed,
Shall see the God who died for man,
And praise Him more than angels can."

"I am no poet," said my father, "and cannot judge whether there is much poetry or not in the hymn that was sung this evening ; but there was something about it that spoke to my heart ; and I was thinking, my dear sir, while those words were sung, with what different feelings I had listened to the sweet voice of your daughter on the

evening of your arrival among us. Then I thought more of the voice than of the words ; and though to-night her voice seemed sweeter and clearer than ever, as it rose like the song of the nightingale high above all the other voices, I was thinking more of the words than of the voice. True it is, that ' we who share His richest love, are yet cold and unconcerned ' ; but I now grieve to feel this coldness ; then I was far more cold and unconcerned, but did not grieve. I grieve over my coldness of heart—I trust I may never cease to do so ; but I am sure you will rejoice to hear, that I am beginning to feel the happiness of my new life. I have taken your advice," he continued, with a quiet gravity, but with the simplicity of a child ; " I have not been seeking happiness, but Christ ; and the more I know of His love, the more I rejoice in it, the more happy I am. Yes, I am happy ; I believe that He has died for me ; that I am forgiven, and accepted in Him ! I am old and grey-headed ; but I can now say, not only with the aged Jacob, ' I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord ' ; but with the good old Simeon, ' Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in

peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'” He took Mr. Wynne’s hand in both of his, and said with deep emotion : “ I shall not only thank God so long as I remain on earth, for having brought you to my house, but I trust I shall do so to all eternity ; for under Him, I owe to you my own soul, and the souls also, I truly believe, of many in this house. Use the opportunity, my good friend, while you have it ; the present season, I trust, may be blest in the highest sense to all of us. I already begin to see some change even in my poor thoughtless Frederic, for which I have also to thank those worthy people the Frasers. The young man is just the kind of companion to have the best effect upon him. He is a fine-spirited fellow, as cheerful as day-light, and as firm as a rock ; and the gentleness and sweetness of the mother and daughter impart a wonderful charm to their religion.”

“ Should we not rather say,” replied Mr. Wynne, “ that the gentleness and sweetness you speak of are the genuine fruit of their religion ? Mrs. Fraser is one of the most lovely Christian characters I have ever met with ; and it may be plainly

seen, that her prayers, and precepts, and example, have been remarkably blessed of God in her children."

"A merry Christmas to you, Horace!" said my uncle Oliver to me. He was the first to meet me on the morning of Christmas Day, and I was the first down that morning. "A merry Christmas to you both!" said my father. Mr. Wynne was the next after my father, and he met us with the same greeting: "A merry Christmas to you."

There was a discussion at breakfast on the word merry. "Is merry exactly the right word," I said to Mr. Wynne. "Might we not say of it, as of the word gay,

——— That honor has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name?"

"Not exactly," he replied. "The word merry in Holy Scripture has a double application. For instance: 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine;' 'A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance;' 'He that is of a merry heart, hath a continual feast.' There can be no doubt of the application of the word in these places by the wise

man, to the joyfulness of those whose rejoicing was of the right kind,—it was the rejoicing of believers, to whom the apostle says : “ Is any merry, let him sing psalms, songs of rejoicing to God, such as the angels sung at the birth of our Blessed Redeemer.’ Such was the rejoicing also of the father in the most affecting of our Lord’s parables, when he said : ‘ Let us eat, and be merry ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again : he was lost, and is found.’ But the word has another application. When the Philistines had put out the eyes of Sampson, and when the lords of the Philistines had gathered themselves together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon, their god, their hearts, we are told, were *merry*, and they said : ‘ Call for Sampson, that he may make us sport.’ Cruel and savage was the sport they made over the sufferings of that once mighty man of valor, and wicked was their merriment. Again,—‘ Soul, take thine ease ; eat, drink, and be merry,’ said one who lived in self-indulgence, and in an entire forgetfulness of God, and whose soul was summoned suddenly and unprepared into the presence of God from the midst of all his earthly enjoyments. ‘ All such

rejoicing is evil.' Alas! the word has its two applications at this blessed season. There are many to whom a merry Christmas is but another name for a season of heathen revellings. Like the rich fool above mentioned, they rejoice in the abundance of God's gifts in a reckless forgetfulness of the gracious Giver; and were Christ to appear among them in the midst of their Christmas merriment, the language of their hearts would be; 'What have we to with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? Let us alone.'"

"We have to thank you, my dear sir," said my father, as he rose from the breakfast-table, "for your promise of preaching our sermon for us to-day. I may say with a godly soldier of old: 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;' and I pray that God Almighty will give His blessing to your instruction. I wish Peregrine could be present, instead of going to his own church to starve his flock. I want you, my friend," he continued, drawing Mr. Wynne on one side, "to recommend me some good plain sermons of the right kind,

which I might put into his hands. I would take care that he should preach them. Indeed, I know he would be thankful for them. From what Susan and the colonel tell me, he sets before them a strange medley of right and wrong; and, alas! his best sermons are of an old dry school; indeed, all are full of such fine words, that Susan says they are quite unintelligible to the poor; which, after all, is of little consequence, for few of them go to hear him. By the by," he added, "poor Mr. Stone's discourses are but a shade better, as I have only lately found out; and I think I shall do well to provide a volume of sermons for him also. He will overwhelm me with thanks for so doing."

Though it was winter, Westhall never looked more beautiful in my eyes than at that Christmas season; perhaps it was owing to the state of my own inward feelings, as the poet sings,—

"When all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile!"

But the weather was delightful, and the place certainly appeared to great advantage. England is the climate for evergreens; and though they do

abound throughout the country, I have often wondered that they are not more cultivated. Some houses are to be found with scarcely an evergreen about them, with the exception of a few low shrubs, instead of presenting on every side umbrageous thickets of perpetual greenness during the dreary winter months, and walks sheltered from the cutting winds by close walls of evergreens. My forefathers had planted evergreen trees and shrubs quickly on every side, and in every variety, from the cedars of Lebanon, with its dark and massive foliage, to the box-tree, with its lively and vivid green. The hanging woods, which clothe the sides of the lofty hills that shelter the house, are partly covered with deciduous trees, yet, forming as they do broad masses in dark relief against the sky, they are still grand and beautiful when their leaves have fallen, being tinted, as all masses of leafless branches are, with some prevailing and peculiar hue, either a rich brown or a deep purple, so making a fine back-ground to the fresh and lovely evergreens. Westhall happily escaped the mania which prevailed for a time in this country, when so many mis-called improvements were made

in the parks and grounds of some of our fine old country mansions. The long straight walks, bordered on either side by clipped evergreens; the formal flower beds; the terraces with their steps, and balustrades of stone; the old bowling-green, encircled with its almost solid wall of yew and privet; even the quaint statues of two most unwarlike warriors of the reign of Charles II, with their high-heeled buckled shoes, flowing periwigs, and drawn swords, were still permitted to stand; though a successive generation of wrens have built their nests among the folds of the embroidered neck-scarf of one of the said gentleman, and the sword of the other has been long broken off nearly to the hilt.

We had fine open weather during the greater part of that winter. The sky was blue and seldom clouded; the air clear and bracing; yet we had no severe frosts, and though the snow fell heavily during one or two days, it did not lie long upon the ground, but gave a spring-like greenness to the lawns. On our southern side of the South downs, many of the more tender evergreen stand unsheltered during the winter; and during that season

even the glossy leaves of the myrtle shone brightly in the sunshine for a few hours during most of the days. Christmas Day was perhaps the brightest and the pleasantest day (I am sure it seemed so to me) of that whole winter, and Mr. Wynne was enabled to accompany us to the cottages of many of the tenants. My father had taken care to send round to every cottage in the neighborhood more than his usual Christmas bounties. Instead of assembling his poorer neighbors, as he had formerly done, to a feast at the hall, he had given a large supply of Christmas fare to every family, that they might be enabled to enjoy themselves at their own homes with their wives and children. And good aunt Margaret had been as liberal in her presents of blankets and warm clothing to every household. We were rejoiced to find the village church crowded with poor people in their Sunday garments, and their happy, healthy looks; and the profusion of holly, and mistletoe, and ivy, with which the whole interior of the building was decked out, gave, as it ought to do, the appearance of a festival day. That was not wanting which could alone give intelligence to the

aspect which the place presented,—the earnest voice of a faithful and affectionate preacher of God's word, publishing the glad tidings of the advent of our Blessed Lord, declaring, on the authority of His Word, that having reconciled us to Himself, by Jesus Christ, he had given to us the ministry of reconciliation; and praying them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. His text was the "Angels' Song;" and he entreated all that were present, to come to the feet of their Blessed Lord, and there, praying for the Holy Spirit, to learn how to give glory to God in the highest; to spread peace on earth, and to show good will toward men. He reminded them that the way to keep Christmas was not only to rejoice that Christ had come into the world,—a world, alas! which had not received Him,—but to examine themselves whether He had been yet received and welcomed into their own hearts, and had made those hearts, by His presence, temples of the living God. That man might well be in heaviness, he said; and could not possibly enter into the right spirit of Christmas rejoicing, at the door of whose heart Christ stood and found it closed against Him, pleaded there to

be admitted, but pleaded in vain. The tender earnestness of his manner, the sweetness of his voice, the affection breathing in every look and every tone, the simple argument of his sermon, and the plain Bible-English in which his beautiful ideas were clothed, made every word that he spoke as easy of comprehension as it was impressive. To bring Christ before us, as being to the whole spiritual world what the sun is to the whole natural world, was the one object of that touching but powerful address,—Christ as the brightness of the glory of God, and the day-spring of light, and the fountair of joy to His people. And he bade us remember, that even as light can only flow forth from the sun, so, in like manner, joy can only flow forth from Christ.

“He that winneth souls is wise,” said my father solemnly. We had been walking in an unbroken silence for some little time after leaving the church, and those few quiet words were evidently the expression of the thoughts that had been working in his mind after the sermon we had just heard. They were responded to by Lady Fraser, in another passage of Scripture, as evi-

dently the impression left by the preacher on her mind : " Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls."

" What think you of the truths we have been hearing ? " I said to my sister, who with her husband then overtook us.

" Dear Horace," she replied, " while I listened to the scriptures that were brought forward, and felt convinced in my conscience of the truth of every word, one thought was continually present with me, that if ever any one needed to offer up the blind man's prayer, ' Lord, that I might receive my sight,' it was myself. That Christ is the source of all true joy, I am well convinced ; but to tell this to me, was as speaking of light to a blind man."

" But do you remember," said her husband, " the closing words of the sermon ? ' We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true.' "

" Thank you, thank you," she cried, " for reminding me of those words. My treacherous

memory had already allowed them to escape. Thank you; for with the recollection of them, comes also the injunction which followed, when He bade us pray earnestly, and pray without ceasing, for the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to anoint and open our eyes, to convey to the understanding the Redeemer's words, and to enable us to understand them."

There was truly such peace and joy in our old family mansion as we had never known before; and my dear father's countenance was perhaps the brightest of any. His looks were no longer sad and thoughtful. He who giveth peace, not as the world giveth, had gradually brought that gracious gift, the fruit of faith, into his heart. There is no way to this peace, indeed, but one—reconciliation to God through His blessed Son; and by faith we are enabled to receive Him, and to become reconciled to God, in Him.

"The persuasion of this," says Leighton, "alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days. Even outward distress to a mind thus at peace, is but as the rattling of the

hail upon the tiles to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast. A few hours of worldly feasting will weary the epicure, but a conscience at peace is a continual feast, with continual unwearied delight."

Not only in Mr. Wynne's sermon,—alas, we had but one in the day at that time,—but on every opportunity, the advent of our glorious Redeemer was prominently brought forward, or referred to, by him, in so delightful a manner, that whenever I have since thought upon that time, I have felt how truly those beautiful words of the apostle applied to him, where he speaks of the "sons of God, not only as blameless and harmless, and without rebuke," but as "shining as lights in the world," light bearers of the word of life, so did he seem to rejoice, not only as anticipating the day of Christ's second advent, but as recalling and realizing also the happiness of those shepherds to whom the announcement of His first coming was so graciously made known. He was like one of them; for the object of his discourse with us was the same as theirs, when they said one to another; "Let us go now even unto Beth-

lehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

"It was thus," he said, "that the children of God should speak one to another, and encourage and incite one another, to look more diligently and closely into the things of God; and seeing how His glory shines forth in its brightest effulgence from the circumstances of earthly poverty and base things of the world, and things that are despised, our faith will be confirmed, and a fuller assurance of hope and more glorious joy will be surely vouchsafed to us. We shall be like the shepherds when they returned from Bethlehem; we shall glorify and praise God for all the things that we have heard and seen, as it was told unto us. We may learn," he continued, "not only from the angels, but from the shepherds." And we felt, as we heard him speak, that we had one among us who combined the two offices; and who, while his message was truly an angel's message to our souls, was in himself as humble as those lowly shepherds.

Though we had no second sermon in the church, our evening worship on that day in a

great measure supplied the want of it. We sung together to the praise and glory of God ; we prayed together for a deeper sense of His unspeakable mercy and love ; we confessed together how unworthy we were of the least of all His mercies ; and we sat in silence together, listening to that portion of His word which His meek and holy minister set before us, and made, as he read, comments and applications, so touchingly beautiful, so peculiarly spiritual, and with such scriptural simplicity, that what he said commended itself not only to our consciences, but to the warmest feelings of our hearts.

After prayers were over, and when many of our party had retired to their own rooms, my sister Susan and I, who had been conversing together, went into the library for a book I had been speaking to her about ; it was a volume of Leighton's works, which I had been reading. It was not there ; and I recollected, after having spent some time in looking for it, that I had left it in the justice-room. To our surprise, we found that uncle Peregrine and Mr. Stone had established themselves there, before a blazing fire.

"You are making yourselves very comfortable here," said Susan, as the two gentlemen rose from their seats; "and you are quite right to make room for me, for I shall be glad to warm myself after standing about in that cold library." They were waiting, as we soon after found, for various bottles of wine and spirits, and a jug of boiling water, which Toogood had been ordered to bring in by my uncle. I do not mean to say, however, by this, that they were either of them of intemperate habits. Mr. Stone was, as usual, loquacious, and turning to uncle Peregrine, he began to praise the exposition which Mr. Wynne had been giving that evening.

"It was very good, exceedingly good, Mr. Peregrine; you agree with me, my dear sir, that the observations we were favored with, were extremely happy, very apposite."

When uncle Peregrine had overcome a yawn, he replied, abruptly:

"Yes; good, very good! but I tell you what, Stone, one may have too much of a good thing. I began to get like Harry, the groom, who sat just opposite me, very sleepy. Poor Harry! he will

get another lecture, I suspect, from good old Peters, for I saw her eyes fixed on him. Mr. Wynne is a good kind of man, I dare say, and very much of the gentleman; I like him well enough, but I must say I am not up to him; and as for all these new ways at the hall, my brother does, of course, as he pleases; and he is pleased with them, very much pleased, I allow; but for my part, I do not understand them—they are novelties, and strange ones!”

“Very true, very true,” said the obsequious Mr. Stone, “they are very good; but I agree with you, they are novelties.”

“We did very well as we were, Stone, eh! don’t you think so? Who was more respected in the county than my brother, and my father and grandfather before him? But there is such a thing as being righteous over much. You and I know that, Stone; and of all these novelties, however good they may be, I would only ask—Will they last?”

“So say I, Mr. Peregrine,” replied Mr. Stone, “they are very good, but will they last?”

“There is a fashion in everything,” continued

uncle Peregrine ; " and religion is now in fashion, it seems, at Westhall."

" Uncle Peregrine, uncle Peregrine," said my sister, " don't go on, or you will make me lose my temper, as you have already made me lose all patience. I really am ashamed of you. Before we find fault with what is good, we ought to be prepared to substitute something that is better. And will you and Mr. Stone tell us a better way of spending Christmas than the old, right, Christian way, though you may term it a new way—a novelty—which my father has introduced for the first time this winter. There is, at least, some meaning and consistency in what you call the new way,—some agreement, I should say,—with the meaning of the holy festival itself, to take the lowest view ; and that is more than can be said of the way in which we used to keep our Christmas. What was it before, but one revel of ungodly merry-making ? Such a scene, indeed, that if He in whose honor we profess to hold it had made His appearance among us, we should either have wished for His departure, or blushed with shame at His presence. Is not this the plain truth ?

Was it a Christian holy-day, or was it not? You say that you are not up to these new ways. Alas! I confess to you, that neither am I. I could not, and I did not, enjoy the day as I ought to have done. My heart is yet unchanged; but my conscience approved all that took place, and reproached me with my coldness and insensibility. But I am happy to think that my old wrong notions have been unsettled and disturbed; and though I did not feel much relish for the right way of spending Christmas, I could not, I am sure, find pleasure any longer in our old ways. If I have not yet found happiness in the new and better way, I hope the time will come to me, as it has already to my dear father, when I shall be able to find enjoyment in these paths of pleasantness and peace. There are no others, uncle Peregrine, depend upon it, worthy of the name; and though both you and I are late learners, let us both remember, that it is never too late to learn. There,—I have finished my lecture, and have now only to beg pardon for my presumption; but you and I have always been more like brother and sister, than uncle and niece. You know how much I

love you ; and though you have almost made me lose my temper, do not lose yours, but tell me you are not angry with me,—you are not, are you ? ”

His head had been turned away, but she was a great favorite ; and when she stooped down, as she stood beside his chair, for she had already risen to leave the room, and when she kissed his cheek, and said again : “ You are not angry ? Answer me that question before I go, for I hear old Toogood’s step approaching ”—he turned with a good-humored smile, and said :

“ Well, then, I am not angry ; and if any one would ever convince me, that I am mistaken in my ways, it will not be Mr. Wynne, though he is a good man, I allow ; no, nor will it be my brother, whom I respect more than any man in the world ; but it will be you, my darling Susan. Ah, you know your power,” he added, looking after her, as we quitted the room ; and he called aloud : “ what has made you so silent, Mr. Horace ? for I dare say you had a lecture on the tip of your tongue as well as your sister.”

I made no reply ; but as the door stood open while Toogood entered with his salver of bottles

and glasses, I could scarcely help smiling, when I heard the obsequious Mr. Stone beginning a high eulogium on the charming playfulness and the winning sweetness of Mrs. Wyndham.

CHAPTER X.

The night is come for the parting;
And those whom we love must go;
And the blinding tears are starting,
Whether we will or no.

Why this distrustful sadness!
For after this gloomy night,
Cometh the morning's gladness,
With its sunny, golden light.—*MS.*

THE winter passed on profitably and pleasantly. I do not say that, like the Christmas week, it was a holiday season to us. It was indeed to our souls what winter is to the year, a time when the tree is gathering strength at the root, though neither leaves nor blossoms nor fruit have appeared to adorn its branches. It was a season of solemn thought and deep searchings of heart. We were beginning to understand that true happiness has nothing of a thoughtless character about it, and that light is thus sown for the righteous, and joy-

ful gladness for such as are true-hearted. Religion, as a vital principle, was beginning to take deep root in many of our hearts: this I have since had good reason to know by the fruit that afterwards appeared. The dignity and grace which it imparted to my father's character was very remarkable; and, as the head of his household, he was enabled to exert its influence in numberless ways. But with the clear sense of his grave responsibility before God, which was now continually present with him, his heart seemed to expand with more benevolence and loving-kindness towards all his family than it had before done. He was strict even to severity in his own self-discipline, but tender and compassionate to the errors and faults of others. He was an example to each of us; and his gentle words carried with them a weight of authority which was acknowledged by all. He had no longer reason to complain of reserve in me; I now made him my confidant on every subject, and consulted him on all occasions; and whereas we had in former times loved one another, as it were, at a distance, our intercourse had now assumed the character of close and intimate affec-

tion. Mr. Wynne had early noticed the reserve I allude to, and plainly pointed it out to me as a fault which it was my duty to amend ; and it was greatly owing to his faithful dealing with me that this delightful and unrestrained intercourse sprung up between my father and myself. The influence which Mr. Wynne, almost unconsciously to himself, obtained in our family —an influence which spread in every direction,—was, I was going to say, extraordinary. But no, it was not so ; for who can calculate the almost certain effect, produced by the exhibition of Christian truth, in the daily walk of a heavenly-minded and consistent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ ? It is asserting no paradox to say, also, that he was at once the gravest and most cheerful person I ever met with. He had said much about the Angels' Song ; and it was well he had called our attention to the subject ; but the keenest and most watchful observer of character would have been compelled to own that his life was the living illustration of it ; and that he had so thoroughly imbibed the spirit of the angelic strain, that it had become as a second na-

ture to him, evidencing itself in the most natural manner in his whole conversation.

The winter was past ; the flowers appeared on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle-dove was heard in our woods ; the trees began to put forth the leaves of tender green ; and the nightingale's return to our shores was made known to us by the notes of the unseen songster in the silent night. The discovery was made by Pamela one lovely evening at the end of April.

We were sitting in the library on the evening of that day. We had had a delightful drive home through the Abbot's wood, where the road is one course of firm and level greensward, with the tall shafts of the old beech-trees bordering it on either side. A cutting east wind had been blowing sharply for the few last previous weeks, and indeed up to the afternoon of that day, and Mr. Wynne had been a prisoner to the house. He had been unable to accompany the rest of our party to spend the day with the Wyndhams at Norman Court. Pamela had staid at home with her father, and I had begged to remain with them. Having an-

nounced a delightful change in the atmosphere, which had taken place just before we sat down to dinner, I proposed that as soon as the dessert was removed, I should drive my two companions to a spot they had never seen, the romantic village of B——. I had ordered tea to be ready in the library on our return home ; and as there was a bright wood fire burning on the hearth, and the room was warm, we sat with the windows open, enjoying the balmy mildness of the air, and admiring the rich glow of a glorious sunset. The view from the windows of the library towards the west has been always much admired by me, though its features are few, and of a somewhat sombre character : a wooded hill on one side, and on the other an abrupt and precipitous cliff of sandrock, and a little glade of the greenest grass winding in between them, and losing itself to the eye in the distance among the projecting sides of the two opposite hills. That portion of the sky which was seen through the stems of the trees seemed on fire : and here and there a slant ray of dazzling splendor shot through the shade of the thick dark foliage of the pines which crown the summits of those hills. A

soft gloom succeeded to the sunset, in which the hills and woods seemed to be shrouded by a black darkness. I was about to close the window, when a whisper from Pamela stopped me.

"It must be!" she said; "I cannot be mistaken, though I have never heard the nightingale before."

The nightingale had indeed returned to our woods, and was singing in the branches of the Catalpa tree, its usual resort, at the foot of the opposite hills; those soft clear notes of thrilling sweetness, came from the depth of that impenetrable gloom, filling the silent air with music.

"It is indeed the nightingale, dear child," said Mr. Wynne: "pray let the window remain open. I am glad that you should at last hear her song."

We sat listening to the unseen bird till the return of the party from Norman Court. I said to myself, as I looked at Pamela, "She is listening at last to a song as sweet as her own"—not that it was half so sweet to my ears. That evening was one I peculiarly note, because it was the day of Mr. Wynne's first visit to B——. The

death of an old uncle of my mother's had put me in possession of the Maner house, and the estate attached to it there, about a year before. The villagers had become my tenants; and I had lately learnt that I had a duty to perform to them, which I was anxious no longer to neglect. I had been building a school-room, and a house attached to it, which had been just completed. Old Mr. Duncome, the rector of the parish, was then alive, but in a feeble state, and unable to leave his house. Mr. Wynne proposed our calling on him, and we did so. I alone went up to the chamber of the poor old clergyman, whom I had known from my childhood. It was a piteous sight to see him as he then was, left alone in the world, enfeebled in body, and desolate in spirit; and I could not resist yielding to the feeling that came over me while I was with him. I told him of the friend who had accompanied me, and added that I thought he was just the person to comfort him. I succeeded in my wish. I took Mr. Wynne up to the poor old man, and left them together. During the few weeks that Mr. Wynne still remained with us, that visit was often repeated; and the

poor old clergyman told me afterwards, that, under God, he owed the salvation of his soul to the prayers, and the gentle instruction—for instruction he owned it was, in things before unknown to him—which he had received during those visits. The state of mind to which Mr. Duncome was brought, had a most beneficial effect upon his health. He was enabled to leave his room, and was spared long enough—for he lived two years longer—to speak to his hitherto neglected and ignorant flock of those divine and delightful truths which had become so precious to his own soul, and to preach to them Jesus Christ and Him crucified, even with his dying breath. The last words that he spoke were in his pulpit; and he who had been a cumber-ground for so many years, was made at the last a burning and a shining light. His parishioners, who had neglected and despised him during the greater part of his sojourn among them, followed him to the grave weeping, and praying, as many of them afterwards told me, that their last end might be like his.

Mr. Wynne had been a faithful friend to me. He had given me much admirable advice; but his

example had a still more powerful influence over me. I saw that he neglected no opportunity of doing good, and followed every opening to usefulness which presented itself. I felt the silent rebuke of such a life. My own existence had been trifled away in a dreamy and self-indulgent indolence. The best that could have been said of me was that I had done no direct harm; but he had taught me both by his precepts and his example, that I had duties to fulfil in my new position, active and delightful duties, which hitherto had been entirely overlooked by me. And the time had come in which I determined, by God's help, to live no longer to myself, but to brace my mind to a course of active usefulness. The spring, which now rapidly advanced, in which every animate and inanimate creature seemed to wake up to renewed life and energy, witnessed the same change in myself. I now clearly understood that every talent that God had committed to me, He had given that I might trade with it for Him, and be prepared for that day when He shall come and reckon with His servants.

Mr. Wynne had fixed the time of his departure for Wales at the beginning of May ; but, at my father's earnest request, it had been delayed for a few weeks. It was with a feeling of mingled joy and sorrow that we regarded him on the last evening of his sojourn with us :—of joy, for we saw him restored to apparent health ; but of sorrow, because the time was come for us to part. The weather, too, was deliciously mild ; the orange trees had been moved out to their summer locality ; and lovely as the grounds of Westhall appeared, even in winter, with their rich masses of evergreen, they were now adorned with all the luxuriant beauty of early summer. The lilacs and syringas, and all the other flowering shrubs of the season, were in full bloom ; and the air was perfumed with the odors of the thousands of violets around. Our desert had been spread in the open air ; and the place looked most inviting when those who had given a new enjoyment to its possessors were about to quit us. I see before me now the whole scene, not with the feelings with which I then viewed it ; for I am ashamed to own, that I had allowed a too natural melancholy to steal over me ;

and many a pang shot through my heart as I yielded to my foreboding, that all that party would never meet again. I endeavored in vain, to dispel my sadness, to attain to the sweet spirit of peace which I saw expressed on the countenance of Mr. Wynne. How wrong I was to give way to a faithless distrust in the goodness of Him, who has always ordered everything not only for my eternal welfare, but even for my happiness in this uncertain state, crowning my whole life with mercies as undeserved as they have been richly bestowed! How often on that very spot have we since assembled, enjoying the purest and sweetest happiness this life can afford. And while the tears have risen to my eyes in humble and adoring gratitude, I have at the same time inwardly smiled at the folly of my gloomy forebodings! On one of those occasions, my wife turned to me and said, with a smile of peculiar sweetness: "Dear Horace, for once, I insist on knowing what you are thinking about?" And when I told her, her smile passed away, and the tears also filled her eyes, with the same adoring thankfulness, as she turned them alternately on every person who was present on

that evening previous to the Wynne's departure, and who were all again assembled there; and then placing in my arms the fair and smiling infant who had been reposing in her own, her smile returned as she added: "There is one present now who was not with us then; not one less, as your fears anticipated, but one more,—another blessing, as I trust this darling child will prove, to both of us."

I return, however, to the night on which our first parting took place; and when they who had come not many months before, as strangers to our house, were about to leave it endeared as beloved friends to almost every individual of the family. Pamela sung to my father his favorite song, "The Bird of Passage;" but it was an unfortunate selection; and when it concluded, a deep sigh was the only comment it received from him.

I had occasion to go up to London about that time, and I arranged my journey so that I was enabled to take the Wynnes in our carriage so far on their way, knowing that I should thus lessen the fatigue of the long journey, and feeling that I should

be enabled to enjoy their company a little longer. My father at parting took Pamela in his arms as if she had been his own child, and kissed her, and told both her and her brother, that he should pray for blessings on their youthful heads.

"May God's best blessings be with you," said Mr. Wynne, taking my father by the hand, "and with all your household, for your kindness and love to me and mine. You have, indeed, exercised Christian hospitality in the noblest and most delicate manner, to those who, when they came among you, were unknown. May the God of all grace reward you!"

"I may well reply," said my dear father, "in the language of that book which you have taught me to love: 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' We have only done this, and we have been thus graciously rewarded."

"And I may reply," said Mr. Wynne, with deep emotion, "that 'I was a stranger, and ye took me in;' and I may add our Lord's assurance, that in doing so to one of the least of His brethren, He counts it as done unto Himself. His messen-

ger, however weak and unworthy in himself he may be, bears the title of an angel of His church, if he delivers his Lord's message faithfully. But I leave you, though sorrowful, yet rejoicing, because that message has been gladly received, as it was gladly given."

I remained in London some weeks, being detained there by business; and the day after my return to Westhall, the first symptoms of that illness appeared, the severest I have ever known, and which soon brought me almost to the gates of death. How I had caught it, I never could discover; but it was that low and mysterious typhus which so often baffles the skill of the most eminent doctors, and which requires, in every turn and change that it assumes, constant watchfulness and unremitting care. My beloved family with fearless affection braved all the risk of infection, and attended me continually; and owing to the mercy of God, and under Him to the admirable precautions taken by our good doctor, no one caught the disease. My brother Frederic was my most attentive nurse. He administered all my medicines

to me; and he did what was to me better than any medicine for the body, he read to me those portions of God's word which I most wished to hear, when my mind recovered from the delirium, which lasted several days. Many years passed away before any decided change took place in his character; but he afterwards owned to me, that it was in my sick chamber, and when reading the Scriptures to me, and thus ministering comfort to my soul, he began first to think of the wants and value of his own.

A sick bed is a thoughtful and a searching time. It was so to me. I was then called upon to make the trial and the proof of those new and holy principles which I had embraced with my whole heart; and to judge, whether I had really done wisely and rightly in giving up all my former opinions and many of my former ways, and casting in my lot with the followers of Jesus Christ. Yes; and I was then enabled to ask myself, as before God, and with the prospect of eternity close at hand, whether the gospel of Christ could stand me instead of all else, and give me real comfort and an assured hope upon a sick or dying bed. I may tell

my reader, that it did so; and I would have him lay these things to heart, and make use of time and opportunities while they are yet given. But while I found the sweetest encouragement and the strongest support from Him in whose arm of strength I alone trusted, that was also the season of deep searchings of heart as to my past life; and as I lay upon my bed, weak and exhausted as a little child, and heard from time to time the tolling of the village death-bell at the funeral of one or other of our poorer neighbors, I could not help saying to myself: "Perhaps the next time that bell may toll, it may be for me; and what, till very lately, has my past life been; what but one idle dream: and what have I myself been but a useless and unprofitable member of the Church of God—a dead branch of Christ the living vine?" Praised and blessed for ever be the Lord God, the Father of mercies, for His unspeakable goodness to me. I was permitted to rise from that bed of languishing sickness, and was enabled to say with one of old: "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, O Lord, as I do this day: the Father to the children shall make known Thy truth. The Lord

was ready to save me, therefore we will sing my songs all the days of our life." Yes, I was spared to raise my heart and voice to sing a far more glorious song than that of Hezekiah's,—to sing not only with the king of God's favored people, but with the angels that surround His throne.

"You look pale and thin," said my father to me on the day when I came down from my chamber to join our domestic circle; "and Dr. Euston has been telling me that he recommends change of air. What say you to making a tour on the continent, as I did at your age? I do not wish to part with you; but your health is much impaired; and if it is to do you good, my Horace, I shall beg you to go."

"The doctor has been speaking to me on the same subject," I replied, "and I believe after he left you. I told him I had no wish to leave my own country; and he is of opinion that a tour in some part of England, where the air is pure and bracing, will be of as much service to me as a visit to the Continent."

"Very good," said my father. After a pause

of thought, he added, "I have a plan to propose, —a mountain tour in Wales, and a visit to our dear friends at Llanelwyn."

I could not help smiling. "Dear father," I replied, "I will not be disingenuous. This is my own cherished plan, and I ought to have said so at once, instead of talking of pure and bracing air, and thus leading your thoughts to Llanelwyn. But to speak sincerely, nothing will do me so much good both in body and mind as a visit to the Wynnes."

There was another thoughtful pause on both sides; then my father drew my arm within his, and said: "Come, let us walk; the air will do you good, and we shall converse with less restraint, and without fear of interruption, in the wilderness: the green walk is delightfully pleasant in this warm weather. You have not been there, my poor boy, since the leaves have come out in all their full luxuriance of shade. If you are tired, we can rest on one of the benches there. Don't hurry yourself; but let us lose no time in going, for if I am not mistaken, aunt Margaret and your two uncles are coming down the great

avenue, and before they find you downstairs, I should wish to tell you what has been long passing in my mind. You have led me to the subject, and I am glad of it. I wish to ask you a question before you determine to set off for Llanellwyn."

I have not forgotten that conversation. I shall never forget it, nor the deep impression then made upon me by the noble and unworldly spirit of my excellent father. The most unreserved confidence existed between us,—and that conversation was to both of us a proof that it did so. I am an old man, now, and must not be garrulous. Would you wish to hear it, dear reader?—yes: well, then, our opinions differ,—I say no. I think it better to pass it over.

On the following day I set out for Wales; and as soon as I reached the mountain region, I left my conveyance, and continued my journey on foot, with my knapsack on my back. Passing through a charming succession of wild and beautiful scenery, I found myself one lovely summer evening ascending the mountain pass which leads to the

village of Llanelwyn. I was a little wearied, not so much from the exertion of walking, for my strength seemed daily to increase in that bracing atmosphere, but by a somewhat desolate feeling, for I was quite alone. My path led me by the course of a mountain stream, which came tumbling and foaming down over its rocky bed ; and at the spot where it was crossed by a romantic bridge, the modest parsonage house, and the church spire, rising among the quiet hills, opened upon my view, and I saw before me the place which had been for so many years the abode of Mr. Wynne and his family. I stopped at that spot and stood in silence for some minutes, gazing on the enchanting scene before me, and lifted up my heart in prayer that, if it pleased God, the object of my visit might find favor in His sight, and be blessed of Him. My short and heartfelt prayer was scarcely ended, when at a little distance two figures suddenly appeared descending the hill, and approaching the spot where I stood. I bounded forward with irrepressible delight to meet them. I could not be mistaken. I was not likely to mistake any other persons for that father

and daughter. Their astonishment was great at seeing me in glowing health, and in the garb of a pedestrian ; but the welcome which I received filled me with delight. I had written to announce my coming, but owing to the uncertainties of cross-country post-offices, my letter did not arrive till two days after myself ; and by the same post came a letter from my father, enclosing one from Mr. Wynne, which had reached Westhall after my departure, and which contained a pressing invitation to Llanelwyn. How happy I was during my sojourn in that remote mountain village, where I was induced to prolong my stay to a longer period than I had anticipated on my arrival. I now saw the pastor of Christ's flock among his own people, and was enabled to judge of the effect of those doctrines and principles which he had taught for so many years, and to witness how graciously God had acknowledged his labors by the blessing which had rested upon them. I was indeed astonished to find the loveliest graces of the Christian character springing forth among a scattered population of poor laboring people, and imparting a gentleness and even a courteousness of spirit and

demeanor which we may often look for in vain in those of far higher rank, who have possessed the advantages of education and knowledge.

I do not dwell upon my visit to Wales, though it led to a result, as you well know, which has constituted almost the sweetest happiness I have known on earth. It has been blessed in every sense to me. That gentle being, who has been so long endeared to us all, is now far more lovely in my eyes than when I sought her among her native mountains in all the fresh and youthful graces by which she was peculiarly adorned. I may truly address her in the words of my favorite poet,—

“Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light;

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me.”

Christmas Eve is close at hand. In a few hours we shall meet, that the above pages may be read to the members of my beloved household. I shall look to some of you to take by turns the

office of reader. I am getting too old to read aloud for any length of time. I led you to suppose at the commencement of these pages, that I should give you a more general account of the events of my past life; but you will find that I have changed my mind; and partly in accordance with the sacred season, and partly from still higher motives, I have dwelt chiefly upon that period in which my attention was first called to the Song of the Angels, at the glorious event which we celebrate at this season. It was then that those endeared individuals came as strangers to this house, whose sojourn was attended with a peculiar blessing, and whose lot has been since so closely interwoven with my own. Glad tidings were then brought to this household, and peace and blessedness have ever since dwelt among us.

I wished to leave with you some faint record of those whom some of you have never seen; who, though unknown in this world, beyond the sphere of private life, were known of God, and were enabled by His grace, in their appointed place, to give glory to Him, adorning their high profession with the peaceful and lovely graces of a

renewed spirit. They were my fellow pilgrims on earth till they entered that heavenly country which they had sought. They had learnt, each one of them, to say with the apostle : " To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." One among them had been truly sent as a herald of salvation, even as an angel of God to bring good tidings of great joy to my father's house : and the Lord had opened many of our hearts to attend unto the things which were spoken of him. From the time that he came to take charge of the parish of B——, after Mr. Duncome's death, when I presented the living to him, he became to the surrounding neighborhood,—I should say especially to the clergy,—the same messenger of life and peace which he had been in the more confined sphere of my father's family. You all know how faithfully your uncle Hugh has followed in his father's course. I say no more on this subject, as he and your aunt Olivia will, I hope, be both present with us when this is read. For the same reason I forbear to speak about some others equally dear to us all. I should expect to be taken to task with justice by my own dear brother, were I to fall into a fault

which I condemn in others, and to say aught about himself and his wife, and their relations the Frasers, which might appear like praise or flattery ; but as the patriarch and elder of the family, I do humbly bless God for the grace that He has bestowed upon them all, and I glorify Him in them.

We may well bless and praise God that so many of us are still together in His church below ; but I would not have you forget, that some of us are very near the end of their journey in the wilderness, awaiting daily their summons to His Church triumphant above. We shall meet to keep a merry Christmas together in our large family gathering, as our custom has long been—in this house. But while we rejoice, as those only can rejoice, who have found Christ to be all and in all to them, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, let no one forget that human life and earthly existence are at all times chequered with light and shade ; and that tears and smiles often succeed each other, as the sunbeams and showers of an April day. You have had many advantages, I may say to all the younger branches of my

family ; but I would again guard you, as I have often done, against too much reliance upon the privileges and means of grace you have enjoyed from your birth. I have early taught you to distinguish the means of grace from grace itself ; and to remember, that while my beloved Pamela and I have watched over you, to guard you from the influence of an evil world, and to surround you with everything that we thought most conducive to your spiritual edification, the Lord God alone is the giver of grace, and without the increase and the blessing from Him, the seed is sown and watered in vain, and the most careful training is of no avail. I have dreaded nothing so much as that any of you should come forth from the midst of your religious privileges to cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, by aught that savors of hypocrisy or formality. I hardly like to touch upon this subject, for I have long learnt not to distrust God. I believe that where parents are as diligent in prayer as they strive to be careful in the instruction they impart, and the example which they set, endeavoring in all ways to put honor upon God, that God will put honor

upon them, and bless the means of grace which they have used.

You will find an illustration of the truth of this in what I have said of the early years of Pamela and Hugh Wynne. I have purposely dwelt in detail on one or two circumstances which occurred when they first came to Westhall, and when principle to God was put to the test, and the effects of a godly training were seen. I might have given many more. They had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; and we can all bear witness, even in their old age, that God has kept them in the way in which they had been so carefully trained.

You see, I speak gravely and solemnly, for much of my time is now spent in quiet and serious meditation. The Word of God is my chief delight. I have long been tired of all other books ; and, like that sweet and celebrated poet, whose graceful tomb you have often admired in our neighboring city of Chichester,—I have, like him in his last days, cast aside all other books. He who reads much in that volume, learns to understand more of the true character of happiness

than any other man, and knows that happiness is not only a solid, but a thoughtful thing. He will be at once the most serious and the most cheerful of men.

May God bless you all, and enable you to fulfil your high calling, to give glory to Him in the highest, to walk in the ways of peace, seeking and spreading peace on every side, lovely and loving one another,—endeavoring, in a word, to live the lives of those who prolong the chorus of the Angels' Song on earth, and so tune their hearts and voices for that glorious land, where they will be made like unto the angels of God in heaven, and join the countless throng of those who sing that new song which we are told no man can learn but the redeemed, whose voices shall be heard in that blessed place as the voice of harpers harping with their harps! But who can speak of the glories of that state, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive. It is enough to know, that there the servants of the Lord shall serve Him, and shall see His face, and shall be for ever with the Lord!

He laid down his pen, and sat half lost in quiet

musings, when his attention was suddenly arrested to sounds of peculiar sweetness,—the singing of young sweet voices without.

Glory in the highest heaven,
To the Lord our God be given !
For the gift, all gifts excelling.
Jesus Christ, the new-born child ;
Born for us, and living, dying,
For the dead in darkness lying ;
In a world polluted dwelling,
Holy, harmless, undefiled.

Christmas comes with joyful greetings,
Blazing hearths, and festive meetings,
Christmas comes to-night, to-morrow,
Christmas-eve, and Christmas-day.
Minstrels at the portal singing,
Bells from all the churches ringing,
Bid the care-worn chase their sorrow ;
And the heavy heart be gay.

Christmas comes ; but ask the reason,
Why you hail the sacred season !
Why you link your mirth and gladness,
With the Saviour's holy name !
If to Christ all honor giving,
Are you to his glory living !
Otherwise your mirth is madness,—
You have put the Lord to shame !

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Come Thou teacher of the lowly,
Wean our hearts from joys unholy ;
Love to Thee, the spirit raises
Far above the careless throng.
Musing on the wondrous story
Of thy mingled shame and glory,
Tune our hearts to sing Thy praises,
With the angels' heavenly song.

L'ENVOY.

I HAVE been asked to write a book for Christmas. This short volume will show rather what I wished to do, than what I have done. I wished to describe the effect of the coming of a godly minister of Christ into an amiable, but ungodly family, and the reform introduced by his influence in the way of keeping Christmas. It is sad to think of the mistake into which many well-meaning people have fallen on the subject of Christmas merriment. Surely, when Christians rejoice, and keep holyday, they should remember the words of the Apostle, to which our attention is especially called by our Church in the epistle appointed for the Sunday next before Christmas Day :

“ Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all

men. The Lord is at hand."* The Angels' Song may well suggest to all the spirit in which the disciples of our blessed Lord should celebrate the sacred season of His coming down to earth. We should let it be seen, that the great object of our lives at all times, but still more particularly at Christmas, is to give glory to God in the highest—to spread peace on earth, and to show good-will towards men.

* Phil. iv. 4.

OTLEY RECTORY,
December 7th, 1850.

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or of the "Records of a Good Man's Life" has become

Works of the Rev. C. B. Tayler, etc.

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'in bondsmen's key,
With hated breath and whispering fearfulness.'

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